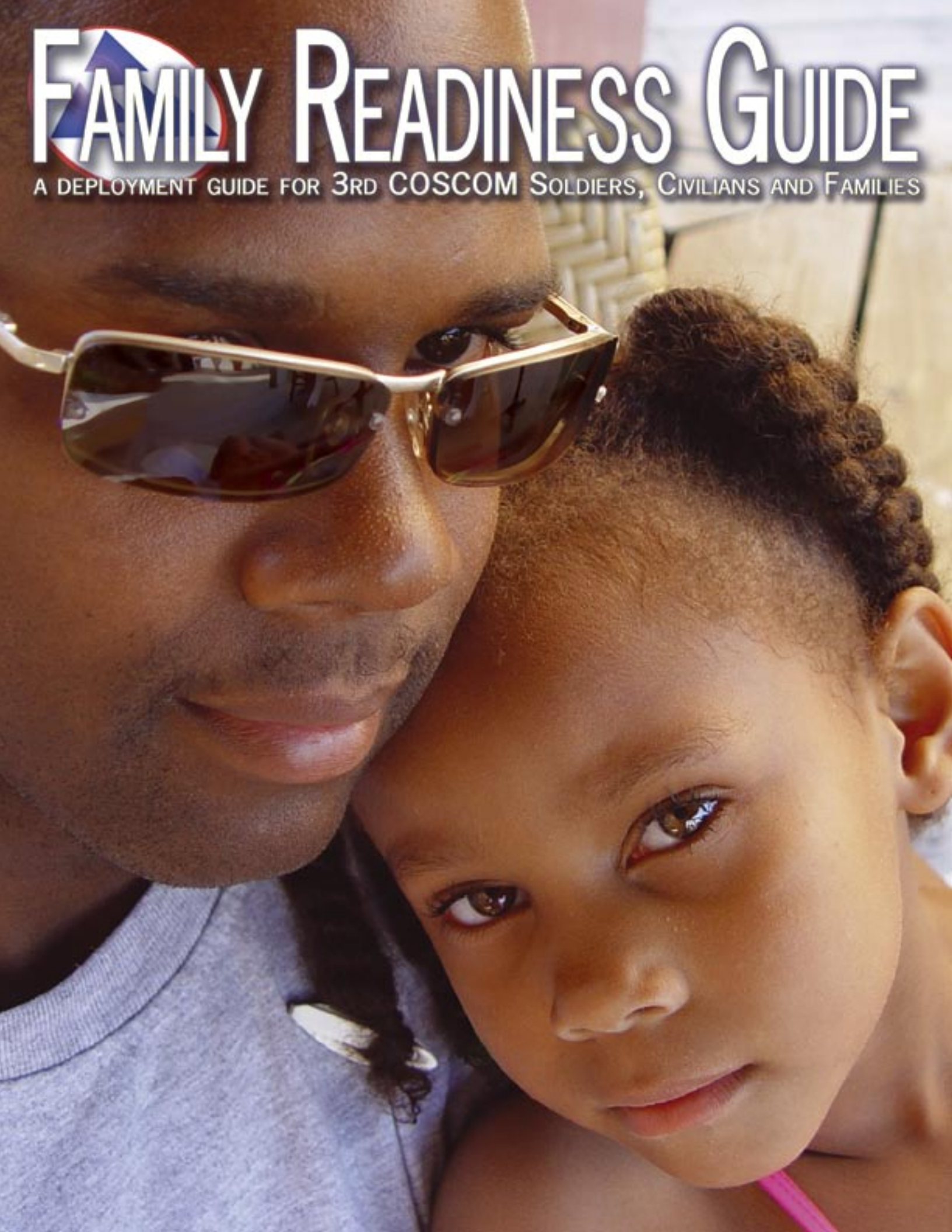


FAMILY READINESS GUIDE

A DEPLOYMENT GUIDE FOR 3RD COSCOM SOLDIERS, CIVILIANS AND FAMILIES





FOREWORD

A message to all families:

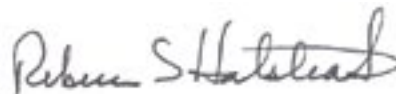
Guten tag! I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the Commander of the 3rd Corps Support Command (COSCOM) and present you with this Family Readiness Guide. This guide is designed for YOU, the families, to assist you during the times when your loved ones are away for extended periods of time. Germany is an exciting place to live, with many sights and historical places to visit. I encourage you and your family to take advantage of the opportunity to travel throughout Europe.

As one of the main sources of logistical support here in Germany, we are frequently called upon to go to the field and deploy to training centers both in and outside of Germany. These training activities are critical if we are to be prepared for our wartime mission. Most recently, we have put this training to the test when we deployed to Kuwait, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Such long and unpredictable deployments show the challenges we face as families in balancing our professional and personal lives. I hope that I can assist in making the quality of life during your stay in Germany the best it can be, even during the difficult “away” periods we may endure.

I’ve prepared this guide for you in an effort to share information that may help you in your day-to-day activities during your spouse’s absence. It is designed to be functional and easy to navigate. It contains valuable phone numbers, guides, how-to information, etc., that can help steer you in the right direction when searching for answers. Our Family Readiness Group leaders recognize that living in a foreign country can sometimes be challenging. Therefore, we have included important information specific to getting along in our local communities and surrounding areas. If this guide does not have the answers you are looking for, help is available within our 3rd COSCOM “family”. There are FRG contacts in each company with training and experience to help in most situations. Feel free to contact them. Also, during times of deployments, the unit will identify a rear detachment commander and first sergeant who will make it their job to assist you as best they can.

I consider YOU, the family member, an integral member of the 3rd COSCOM Team. Truly, you are the ones that get us through the most critical times. The welfare of both the Soldiers and their families is extremely important to me. My best wishes to all of you for a successful and happy tour with 3rd COSCOM. I dedicate this Family Readiness Guide to all of you who *Sustain* the home front.

Best Wishes,



REBECCA S. HALSTEAD
BG, USA
Commanding

“Sustaining the line with STEADFAST Leadership!”

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The 3rd COSCOM family would like to thank all those whose hard work is represented within: Bruce Anderson, Spec. Mary Ferguson, Chaplain (Capt.) Raymond Folsom, Nancy Marquardt, Spec. Monica Olson and many others.

FRG PHILOSOPHIES



The Unit Family Readiness Group

Program Vision

A seamless force of mission-ready Soldiers and informed, self-reliant families.

Mission Statement

Provide Family Readiness Programs that promote self-reliant Soldiers and families.

The Family Readiness Group (FRG) is your primary link to information regarding the unit and its various missions. During times of deployment, the FRG will keep you informed via newsletters, E-mail, and the Phonetree. The FRG also organizes “morale” activities for deployed Soldiers, such as family organizational days, training, holiday and care package mailings. The FRG should function as a support system. You are invited to participate in the FRG by either attending its activities and/or volunteering for the various leadership positions.

Key Players in the Family Readiness Group:

Commander, or if the Commander is deployed, the Rear Detachment Commander (RDC), is the command’s primary contact and the vital link between the FRG and the deployed unit. During deployment, the Commander or RDC is the point of contact (POC) for all official action.

Family Readiness Group (FRG) Leader heads the Family Readiness Group. He/she will assist the Commander with the communication link between the unit and its families, and assists in linking families with community resources. He/she will provide information, outreach services and emotional support to military families before, during, and after family separation to ease the stress associated with military life. The FRG Leader works closely with the command, unit POCs, and Family Readiness Liaison and organizes periodic meetings, ensures FRG volunteers receive training and recognition, oversees unit FRG activities, and represents the unit at the higher-level unit FRG or steering committee meetings.

Senior Advisor (SA) is an individual with extensive experience with the Family Readiness Program. This may be the commander’s, command sergeant major’s, or first sergeant’s spouse; but that is not always the case. They work with the FRG members to provide guidance and resources to the unit program. Senior Advisors also work with higher headquarters to represent the interest of the unit family members and the FRG.

Family Readiness Support Assistant (FRSA) works directly for the commander during peacetime and for the RDC during deployments. The FRSA’s main duty is to

provide the commander, the FRL, and the FRG Leader with administrative assistance in support of family readiness programs and activities. The FRSA also works closely with the community resource agencies to provide appropriate referrals when needed.

Family Readiness Liaison (FRL) ensures appropriate unit support is provided to the FRG. The FRL ensures required reports are forwarded to the 3rd COSCOM Family Readiness Office, and appropriate records are kept during the year. Additionally, the FRL complies with all regulatory requirements regarding the Family Readiness Program. The FRL keeps the higher headquarters point of contact informed of the activities of the FRG, keeps the commander fully informed of FRG plans, activities, and coordinates needed support with the commander. FRLs also keep an accurate list of unit members’ names, family members’ names, addresses, e-mail addresses, and phone numbers, (also known as the phonetree).

Family Readiness Point of Contact (POC) The primary duty of a POC is to manage the information flow between the families and the FRG Leader. This person is a family member volunteer who maintains regular contact with the families assigned to them and facilitates the dissemination and collection of accurate information. The POC is tasked with contacting family members once a month during periods of sustainment and twice a month in times of deployment.

Chaplain provides a crucial role in offering spiritual guidance, moral support, marital and family counseling, and referrals to community resources as needed.

The Chain of Concern

“One People, One Family, One Team”

Separation is never easy for either the service member or the family. The Army recognizes this and continues to try to reduce the stress level felt by Army families and to help them become more self-sufficient and self-reliant. In 1987, the Department of the Army took a giant step forward when it issued a regulation implementing command-supported Family Readiness Groups (FRG).

These mandated Family Readiness Groups are to be sponsored by every unit. They are part of the commander's program, and every Soldier (all ranks in the unit) and his/her family members are automatically part of the group. Each unit commander is responsible for developing how the unit's Family Readiness Group will function, so each FRG is a little different. Nevertheless, the principal purpose of each remains the same: To establish a system for the unit's family members to receive information, obtain problem solving assistance and find support during stressful times.

The Phonetree / Chain of Concern

The Phonetree is an important feature of Family Readiness Groups (FRG) and is a network for communication and support among family members. To establish this network the unit needs to know: who and where the family members are; their telephone numbers; and any special needs, skills or concerns. This information is strictly confidential, but essential for contacting and assisting family members should the need arise.

Each unit is divided into groups, preferably within the same geographic location, for easier information dissemination. A Phonetree contact person (POC) leads each group. A small pyramid, or “Chain of Concern”, comprised of these groups is then established.

At the top of the “Chain of Concern” is the FRG Leader. When the FRG Leader receives information from the unit to pass down the chain, she/he calls those on the next level of the pyramid, who call their contacts. Each of them calls everyone in their group

and, thus, the information is passed quickly to all the unit's family members.

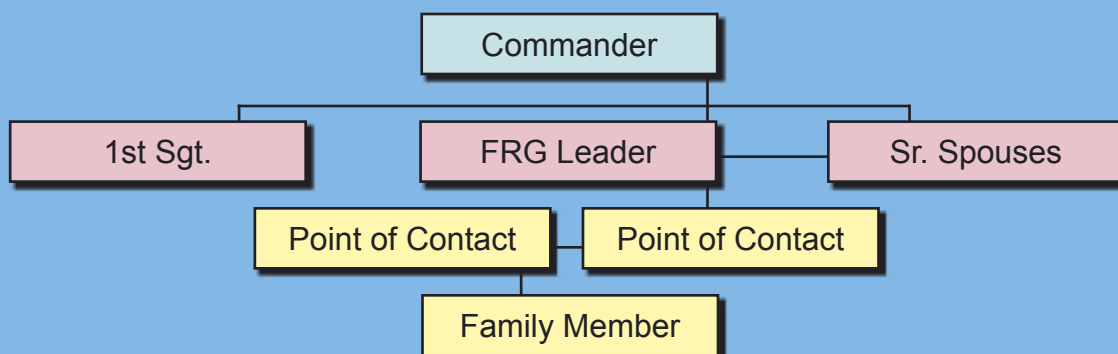
Each group's contact person passes information both up and down the chain.

In addition to calling everyone when information needs to be passed down the chain, the contact person also stands ready to offer support for the groups' members. The contact person may not personally be able to solve all the problems that are brought to their attention, but they can be an important source of information by directing family members to where they can receive help.

Family Readiness Groups can be more than just conduits for information and questions. They can serve to bring people with common interests together during times of separation, and facilitate a network of support in a time of stress.

Going “UP” Your Chain of Concern

Knowing your chain of concern will help accurate information flow both ways.





An illustration of two people, a woman on the left and a man on the right, walking away from the viewer towards a body of water. They are holding hands. The woman has blonde hair in a ponytail, wears a yellow t-shirt and purple shorts. The man has short blonde hair, wears a purple long-sleeved shirt and yellow shorts. They are walking on a white path. The background is a light blue sky and a body of water with wavy lines. The word 'COMMUNICATION' is written in large, bold, black capital letters across the bottom of the image.

COMMUNICATION

TELEPHONE CALLS AND MORE= Advice for Stateside Families

Telephone calls are a popular method of communication. When you converse with your loved one, it is calming and exciting to hear their voice and be able to respond instantly. The cost of calling may be prohibitive, though, depending upon the location of your spouse and access to telephones. Also remember that depending on their assigned duty station, Soldiers may not have daily telephone access.



Calls within the U.S.

Frequent calls to your Soldier can put a strain on your budget. Shop around for a less expensive calling plan, such as one of the 10-10-xxx services. Another way to save is to purchase low cost per minute phone cards. You may want to determine how much you can afford to spend each month on

phone calls and purchase a card for that amount.

Overseas Calls

Nothing can substitute for the sound of a loved one's voice, which is why overseas calls are so popular. The cost, however, may be exorbitant! Agree before the deployment starts how many times, and when calls can be made. Then budget the money to cover it. When you make a call, have a prepared list of what you want to talk about. Be ready for the unexpected, such as fears and expressions of loneliness. Many long distance providers offer special international calling packages with lower rates for international calls.

However, be aware that your long distance rates for calling within the U.S. will probably increase. If you have two phone lines, use one for the U.S. long-distance rates and the other for international rates. Using a telephone company calling card (MCI, AT&T, and Sprint) may be the most expensive way to call home.

Morale and Welfare Calls

The Defense Switched Network (DSN) is a primary information transfer network for the Defense Information Transfer network (DISN). The DSN provides the worldwide non-secure

voice, secure voice, data, facsimile, and video teleconferencing services for DOD Command and Control (C2) elements, their supporting activities engaged in logistics, personnel, engineering, and intelligence, as well as other Federal agencies. DSN calls to family members are frequently referred to as the Morale and Welfare calls.

If Soldiers have the opportunity and DSN is available, they can contact a local (to their home) DSN installation operator and have them transfer the call to a local residence. If the call is long distance from the installation to the residence, Soldiers can use long distance telephone cards through DSN to assist them in placing the call and they are only charged for the cost from the installation to the home. Installation DSN numbers can be found at www.krccs.com/dsndir/DSN02IDX.HTM.

Hearts Apart Morale Calling Program

One way to keep in touch with each other is through a program that the Air Force is calling the Hearts Apart Morale Calling Program. Air Force base operators will permit you to call your deployed spouse once a week from home! The call is free of charge, unless you live far enough away from the base that it would be a long distance call to the base operator. (If the call from your home to the base carries a toll, you pay only the cost of the call to and from the base.) You're allowed one call per week, lasting up to 17 minutes. The operator may cut-in at about 15 minutes to give you and your spouse a two-minute warning. That way you don't get cut off without the chance to say your good-byes.

To take advantage of this program you must register through the Family Support Center of the Air Force base closest to your home. You can locate this base by going to www.afcrossroads.

com. Take a copy of your spouse's orders and speak to the Family Program Director. You need to know the DSN number for your spouse's unit in order to place these calls.

When you place your call, you will first call the base operator. The Air Force Family Support Center can provide that number. Tell the operator you're placing a Morale Call, who you are, who you're calling and the DSN number. They'll ask questions so they can log the call.



Contacting the American Red Cross to Send an Emergency Message

Service members stationed in the United States and their immediate family members can call the Red Cross Armed Forces Emergency Service Centers for help seven days a week 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

The toll-free telephone number is available through base or installation operators and from local Red Cross offices.

Warning

When using military phone lines you may be cut off without warning for a military priority call. If that happens and you've spoken for less than three minutes, you can retry your Morale Call. You get one call per week; the week is considered Sunday through Saturday. If an emergency arises and you've already used your weekly Morale Call, contact your unit POC.

Video Teleconferences

The unit or installation may also have the capability to hold video teleconferences (VTC) where you are able to see your spouse and other members of the unit. Stay in contact with the unit and the FRG. They are the best source of information on what is happening during the deployment and what resources you can access.

Emergency Messages

Sometimes you need a faster method of contacting the service member, because of a serious illness or injury, a death in the family, a birth or hospitalization. Depending on the severity of the situation, there are two ways of sending a message. **First, contact your Unit Point of Contact or FRG for advice.** Once you have sent an emergency message, follow up with a written letter to your Soldier, giving all the details.

Other family members who do not reside in the service members' household, members of the National Guard and Reserves, retirees and civilians may access Red Cross services through their local Red Cross chapter. Red Cross chapters are listed in the local telephone books and on the American Red Cross Web site at www.redcross.org/where/where.htm.

Overseas personnel stationed on military installations should call base or installation operators or the on-base Red Cross offices. At overseas deployment sites, contact the American Red Cross deployed staff.

When calling the Red Cross to send an emergency message to a family member, please have the following information ready to speed the processing of sending your message:

- Service Member's Full Name
- Rank/Rating
- Branch of Service
- Social Security Number
- Military Address
- Information about the deployed unit and the home base unit (for deployed service members only)

For additional information on the American Red Cross or services visit www.redcross.org.

CARE PACKAGES

A “care package” is exactly what it sounds like - a little bit of home that says, “I love you.” With a little planning, they can be a great link over the distances. They are also morale builders during deployment.

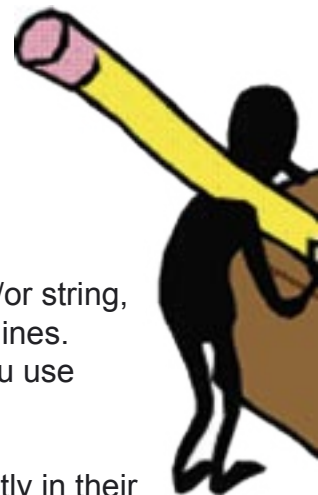
Mailing Tips

You may want to give this information to your friends and relatives before they send care packages:

- You Soldier may be "on the go" a lot, so try to keep you packages on the light side.
- You will need to fill out a customs form for all packages. Packages less than 4 pounds require the smaller form. Packages more than 4 pounds require the larger form. Forms are available at all U.S. post offices and most post offices don't mind if you want to stock up on them. You will not need a customs form for letters and cards.
- Every package is inspected and placed through scanners, so be sure to send only allowable items to avoid delays.
- Put any item that could leak or melt in a leak-proof zip-sealed bag.
- Fill any extra space with foam peanuts, bubble wrap or Styrofoam popcorn.
- **UPS WILL NOT ACCEPT PACKAGES ADDRESSED TO APOs AND FPOs.**
- Packages **MUST** be addressed to a specific Soldier. No "ANY SOLDIER" Packages are allowed.
- Packages are limited to 70 pounds, and must not exceed 130 inches total (width + length + height). A surcharge will be assessed on any

package more than 108 inches

- Do not use wrapping paper and/or string, as it will foul up the postal machines. The post office recommends you use reinforced nylon strapping tape.
- If cookies are not packaged tightly in their container and well cushioned, you might get a letter about the lovely crumbs you sent.
- Put an extra address card **INSIDE** before sealing the package. If the box should be damaged, and neither address on the outside can be read, it will be opened by the post office. If they cannot find an address, the whole package goes to the dead-letter bin.
- Do not send anything that is highly perishable: there is no refrigeration available in the postal service.
- If you send a package for a special occasion, mail it so it has plenty of time to arrive. Better a little early than to let them think you have forgotten them.
- Do not send aerosols (shaving cream, deodorants, etc.) or liquids in glass containers.



Care Package Suggestions

Food Items

- Sports drinks
- Instant coffee
- Powdered Gatorade
- Powdered hot chocolate

- Kool-Aid (pre-sweetened of course)
- Tea bags
- Baked goods
- Crackers and easy cheese
 - Single servings of bagged chips. (The small bags stay fresher longer)
 - Gum, candy, (M&M's are great, anything that won't melt)
 - Dry cereal (individual serving boxes stay very fresh)
 - Jerky
 - Granola bars, power bars
 - Dried fruit
 - Instant soup
 - Spices (onion powder, garlic powder, spice all, etc)
- Instant Oatmeal
- Salsa
- Nuts
- Popcorn balls
- Marshmallows
- Salad dressing
- Fast food condiments (hot sauce, ketchup, mustard, salt and pepper packets, relish mayo)

Practical Items

- Baby wipes
- Razors, shaving cream
- Shampoo, conditioner
- After-shave lotion
- Liquid hand sanitizer
- Mouth wash
- Deodorant
- Nail clippers
- Cotton swabs, cotton balls
- T-shirts, underwear and socks
- Towels
- Lip balm
- Sun block
- Lotion
- Tylenol or aspirin
- Lip balm
- Hand held or clip-on fan
- Travel alarm
- Sewing kit supplies



- Dental floss
- Baby powder
- Foot powder
- Combs/brushes
- Tooth brushes
- Breath mints
- Contact lens cleaner
- Shoe shine kit
- Shoe insole cushions
- Eye drops
- Plastic storage bags
- Feminine products
- Phone cards
- Mouse traps
- Sealable plastic containers (to keep out mice)

Just for Fun Items

- Stress ball
- Stamps, paper, and envelopes with a nice writing pen might inspire a few more letters home
- Paperback books and magazines
- Disposable cameras
- Puzzles
- Film
- Journals
- Yo-yos
- Frisbees and Hackie Sacks
 - Small flash lights
 - Jump ropes
 - Post cards from your home state
 - Handmade items
 - Portable CD Players and head sets
- Mini fans
- Jokes and comics
 - Single sheet sets
 - Games/cards
 - If they are gone over a holiday, send one box with just holiday stuff. Be creative.
- Make a CD of favorite songs
- Make a miniature scrapbook
 - Foam footballs and basketballs
 - CDs
 - DVDs
 - School work, kid's art



KEEPING IN TOUCH FROM HOME . . . COMMUNICATION IDEAS

It is important for family members to share their thoughts, feelings and information about daily events with their service member while he or she is away. This communication plays a critical role in maintaining an emotional balance for the person who is deployed as well as for those remaining at home. Good communication during separation helps everyone adjust more easily after the family is reunited.

Letters

Letters and cards are one of the least expensive and most satisfactory ways to stay in touch. Military postal systems are usually set up near the unit. Service members will tell you that it is great to get a letter, card or package from home. It is a good idea to number your letters, as they do not always arrive in the order in which they were sent.

Some ideas to help enhance your long distance communication

- Write your Soldier letters often and supplement with cards when possible
- Ask advice when needed
- Explain problems clearly. If vague and unresolved, your spouse will worry.
- Express appreciation for letters, tapes, etc., mentioning one or two points of special interest.
- Tell of daily activities in an amusing and interesting way.
- Remember the importance of the amount and frequency of expressions of affection.
- Share your feelings as openly and freely as you can without indulging in

self-pity.

- Above all, express yourself clearly and unequivocally so he/she will not have to say, "I wonder what was meant by that!" Neither husband nor wife should try to interpret what the other says, read



between the lines, or dissect the meaning. If you do not understand, ask questions – otherwise take things at "face value."

- If you have children, have them enclose notes and drawings. Send photos of home, holiday decorations, activities, etc. Give news of the neighborhood, friends, and relatives.

E-Mail

E-mail is an inexpensive way to communicate, and offers almost instant contact. Sending e-mail is convenient for everyone if they have access

to a computer. With e-mail you can write a few lines when it is convenient for you and no one needs to worry about time zones or the best time of the day to call. Most Soldiers will have e-mail access when deployed. The wide availability of e-mail during deployments eases separation anxiety.

Army Knowledge Online (AKO)

AKO allows family members the ability to rapidly access general knowledge about the Army and to keep in touch with their Soldiers across a secure communications channel while at home station or during deployments.

Every family member is eligible for an AKO account/ e-mail address. A family member merely needs to sign in as a new user and request a guest account; their Soldier must serve as their sponsor. Once a Soldier approves a family member's request, the Soldier and family member are connected in a trusted sector of cyber space. They can exchange e-mail, chat online, and engage in instant messaging. Moreover, it is free at www.us.army.mil/.

It is beneficial to have an AKO account in case your Soldier is unable to access the more popular email providers.

What to Send Someone Who is Deployed

Receiving a care package from home can be a real morale booster for a deployed service member. Choosing and packing the contents of the package will also help you feel closer to your loved one. Your service member will undoubtedly appreciate anything you send, but some things are particularly useful, and some items can't be sent at all. Before putting together your service member's care package, find out what he or she wants, and check to see if there are restrictions on what you can send.

Packing tips

Priority Mail packages take 10 to 14 days to reach their country of destination. Depending on where your service member is, more time may pass before the package is in his or her hands. When choosing what to send, keep in mind possible delays as well as any climate extremes the package may be subjected to.

- Check on size and weight restrictions for packages. Packages cannot be larger than 108 inches in total circumference (total width all the way around plus total length all the way around), but your service member's unit may have its own restrictions on the weight and size of packages. These restrictions may change as the unit changes location. It's best to limit your care packages to the size of a shoebox. You can pick up free Priority Mail boxes at your post office. Use the #4 or #7 size box.
- Enclose a card listing the contents of the package. Include the recipient's name and your name on the card. That way, if the package breaks open and the contents scatter during shipping, mail handlers will know what to repack.
- Place items that may spill or leak in heavy plastic zipper-lock bags. Freezer bags work well and your service member will likely find other uses for the bags.
- Use reusable packing material. Cushion fragile items with small packages of tissues; copies of the local newspaper; plastic zipper-lock bags filled with popped popcorn; small beanbag-style stuffed toys (for your service member to hand out to local children); or anything else you can think of that your service member will be able to use.
- Write out the complete address. The address should include your service member's full name (with or without rank or rating), unit and APO/FPO (Air/Army Post Office or Fleet Post Office) address. Be sure you have the unit name, including the battalion, ship, squadron, platoon, etc., with the nine-digit ZIP code, if one is assigned.
- Number your packages and letters. Some may take longer to arrive. Numbering them will alert your service member to letters and packages that are still on their way.
- Do not send perishables to warm climates during spring or sum-

mer. Avoid sending anything that may spoil to a desert environment such as Iraq during warm months. The climate heats up rapidly between winter and spring and the temperature inside mail storage facilities may rise to over 120 degrees.

Food and drink

- Powdered drink mix. Your service member will appreciate anything that can be mixed with water. In cold months, send hot beverage mixes such as cocoa, instant coffee, tea bags, and creamer. During warmer months, sweetened drink mixes such as lemonade and iced tea will be welcome.
- Meal enhancers. Anything that can be mixed with MREs (Meals Ready to Eat), such as ramen noodles, seasoned salt, individual packets of hot sauce, mustard, relish, and ketchup.
- Quick protein. Energy bars, tuna fish, sardines, non-perishable beef jerky, or beef summer sausage. Make sure the meat is labeled USDA Beef.
- Snacks. Look for small, hard containers of chips, pretzels, and nuts. These are easier to carry than large containers. Avoid bags, which may burst under high pressure. If you do send large bags or containers, include small zipper-lock bags so your service member can pack smaller amounts of snacks to carry. Snack cakes, cheese crackers, and cookies are in high demand. Salty snacks are good for those deployed in the desert, especially in the summer months, because they will encourage your service member to drink more water.

- Candy and gum. Avoid chocolate if your service member is in a warm climate. It will melt in the heat. Gum and other types of candy may soften and become gooey, so send these in plastic zipper-lock bags. Send plenty of extras for your service member to share, especially if he or she comes into contact with children.

Personal care and clothing

Choose small, travel-size containers of personal care products, and avoid aerosol cans. To keep liquids from spilling, cover the opening of the container with plastic wrap, then recap before shipping.

- Toiletries. Toothbrush, toothpaste, dental floss, cotton swabs, shaving lotion, disposable razors, shampoo, individually packaged tissues.
- Personal care. Individually packaged baby wipes, eye drops, lip balm, lotion, aspirin or other pain reliever, feminine hygiene products for women.
- Foot care. Moleskin, medicated foot powder, athlete's-foot ointment.
- Disposable hand warmers. Send these during the winter if your service member is in a cold climate.
- Goggle-style sunglasses. Your service member will appreciate these if he or she is deployed in the desert.
- Cotton socks and underwear. Make sure the garments are made of 100 percent cotton rather than a cotton blend.
- Fingerless gloves, stocking caps, long underwear, if the climate is cold.

Entertainment and communication

- Reading material. Paperback books, current magazines, comic books.
- Word games and puzzles. Crossword puzzles, word searches, jigsaw puzzles.
- Games. Foam footballs and basketballs, Frisbees, Hacky Sacks, playing cards, yo-yos.
- Electronics. Portable DVD player, CD player, DVDs, CDs, handheld electronic games.
- Batteries. Size AA and D batteries are in high demand. When sending a battery-operated device, such as a CD player, remove the batteries so the appliance doesn't accidentally turn on during shipment.
- Disposable camera.
- Writing material. Notepaper, envelopes, pens,

pencils, and stamps.

- Phone cards. Shop around to get the best deal on overseas minutes.

Reminders of home

In every care package, be sure to include a personal note or other special reminder of home. Photographs, drawings, and videotapes of your activities at home comfort your service member. Here are some more ideas:

- Your children's art projects or schoolwork.
 - A small scrapbook filled with mementos from home.
 - A homemade cassette tape or CD of your service member's favorite songs.
 - The Sunday comics from your local newspaper.
 - Homemade goodies, such as cookies or brownies.
- Just be sure to pack these in airtight containers.

What not to send

There may be items you cannot send, depending on where your service member is located. If your service member is in the Middle East or Persian Gulf areas, you should not send anything that would offend people of the Islamic faith, including pork or pork by-products, obscene material, religious materials contrary to Islam, anything depicting nude or semi-nude persons, pornographic or sexual items, alcohol, or nonauthorized political materials. Check with your Key Volunteer, Ombudsman, or command family support group point of contact for details on further restrictions. You can also look up restrictions by ZIP code at the United States Postal Service Web site, www.usps.com/cpim/fbp/bulletin/2003/html/pb22101/apofpo.html.

If your service member needs the essentials but you want to save your care packages for special items, you can purchase a gift certificate to the exchange. The program, Gifts from the Homefront, allows you to buy your service member a gift certificate good at any military exchange in the world, including those supporting Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. To purchase one online, go to certifichecks.com and click on military gift certificates.

This article was written with the help of Air Force TSgt. Nathan Covington I, Family Readiness NCO, 97 Mission Support Squadron, Family Support Center; the Family Support Center Staff, Goodfellow AFB; and Kim Gates, HQMC, MCFTB Program Section Head,

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FINANCES



ENTITLEMENTS

Entitlements during OIF/OEF deployments are explained below and are current as of April 2005:

BAS and Separate Rations: Basic allowance for subsistence (BAS) and separate rations are continued for those already receiving it and scheduled to deploy. All Soldiers are entitled to BAS and during deployment, all Soldiers receive it.

Separation Allowance: If deployed for more than 30 days, a Soldier with qualified dependents receives a daily separation allowance. When deployed, separation allowance will be started when the Soldier in-processes downrange. The Separation Allowance begins on the 31st day and is retroactive for the thirty past days of deployment. SEP Allowance for OEF is \$200.

Foreign Duty Pay (SAVED Pay on the LES): All enlisted Soldiers deployed to an area that qualifies as Foreign Duty receive Foreign Duty Pay according to their rank. SAVED pay for OEF & OIF is \$100.

Hostile Fire/ Eminent Danger Pay: All Soldiers deployed to areas that have been declared as imminent danger or hostile fire zone qualify for danger pay. Hostile Fire pay for specified areas is \$225.

BAQ/OHA: Basic allowance for quarters (BAQ) and Overseas Housing Allowance (OHA) is not terminated if Soldier is deployed.

Per Diem: A per diem is paid for every day a Soldier is deployed. It is the Soldier's responsibility to apply for the per diem once their deployment is over. Past per diems for deployment have been \$3.50/ day—call finance for the current per diem pay upon return.

COLA: The Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) will remain the same as long as the family member remains in current housing. Should the spouse return to the States for longer than 30 days, COLA will reflect the Soldier as having no dependents beginning the 31st day. To revert COLA back to "with dependents", the service member must submit a DA Form 4187.

THE FINANCIAL ROAD

Experience with previous deployments and separations indicate some spouses are financially unprepared for their Soldier's departure. The following information can help you overcome many financial obstacles during deployment.

CONCERNS

Finance and Accounting Office (FAO) provides information concerning a Soldier's pay to the rear detachment. If a problem arises such as a non-deposit of funds at the bank, contact your FRG Leader or the Rear Detachment Commander.

Eliminate Credit Cards

Keep plastic money to a minimum. It gives you a false sense of wealth where there really isn't any money.

Allotments

Service members should start allotments for recurring payments prior to deployment. Discretionary allotments are authorized for commercial life insurance, car loans, support of dependents, mortgages, consumer credit loans and deposits to financial institutions. If you have to take casual pay for any reason such as emergency leave, your allotment will still be secure. This eliminates a surprise shortfall in pay to your family.

Family members

- Can contact the rear detachment for information on pay.
- Cannot obtain casual pay.
- Should contact the rear detachment commander for information on occasional assistance.
- Can see the Red Cross or Army Emergency Relief (AER) for assistance if a serious problem arises.



Spouses should understand how to read an LES. An article on “Understanding your Leave and Earnings Statement” is included in this section. *For more LES or finance information, call your local Finance Office.*

DIFFICULTIES

If serious financial difficulties arise while your spouse is deployed, contact the rear detachment so the Soldier can be contacted.

Financial Support for Spouses

Prior to deployment, the deploying Soldier should establish a joint checking or savings direct deposit account that is maintained by the spouse.

Beware, due to distance and difficulty of communication, a check overdraft may occur if both Soldier and spouse write checks drawn on the same account. Therefore, the Soldier should consider opening a separate checking account in addition to the joint account. The Soldier may elect to start an allotment to the separate checking account or have the spouse make monthly deposits to the account.

In case of financial difficulties, the Soldier can send an allotment to the spouse. Ensure the allotment covers all the expenses necessary to run a household.

If you have questions concerning military pay, contact the Rear Detachment Commander or call the Finance Customer Service line in your area.

Savings Deposit Program (SDP)

During deployment, you can deposit up to \$10,000 in a savings plan that earns 10% interest annually. Deposits can be made by allotment (preferred), check, cash, or money order. Call the Finance office on details in how to participate in this plan. Or visit <http://www.dod.mil/dfas/money/milpay/savingsdeposit.htm>

FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS

Army Emergency Relief (AER) provides loans and grants under emergency conditions. If they cannot help they may refer you to Red Cross, but you must start with AER.

Army Emergency Relief (AER)

AER is a private nonprofit organization incorporated in 1942 by the Secretary of War and the Army Chief of Staff. AER's mission is to provide emergency financial assistance to those in need.

Who Does AER Help?

- Active duty Soldiers, single or married and their dependents.
- Army National Guard (ARNG) and U.S. Army (USAR) Soldiers on continuous active duty for more than 30 days and their dependents.
- Soldiers retired from active duty for longevity or physical disability and their dependents.
- ARNG and USAR Soldiers who retired at age 60 and their dependents.
- Surviving spouses and orphans of Soldiers who died while on active duty or after they retired.

What can AER do?

- Help with emergency financial needs for:
 - Food, rent or utilities
 - Emergency transportation and vehicle repair
 - Funeral expenses
 - Medical/dental expenses
 - Personal needs when pay is delayed or stolen
- Give undergraduate level education scholarships, based primarily on financial need, to children of Soldiers.

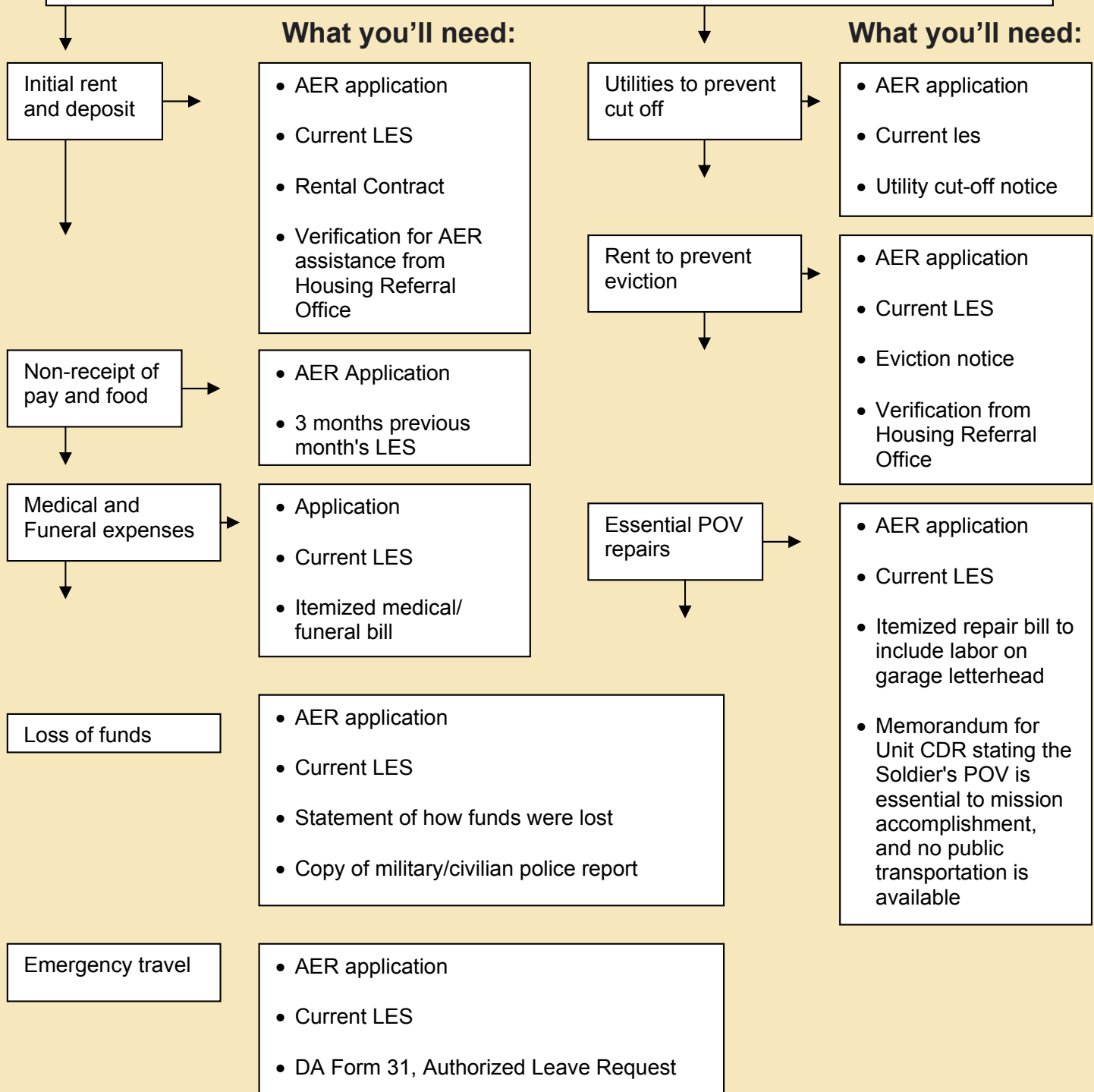
What should I bring with me to the AER office?

- Military ID card
- Leave and Earnings Statement
- Leave/PCS Orders
- Substantiating documents (car repair estimate, rental agreement, utility bill, etc.)
- Power of Attorney
- Military ID Card and substantiating documents

HOW CAN I GET EMERGENCY FINANCIAL HELP?

AER LOANS

Army Emergency Relief (AER) can provide financial assistance in the following circumstances:



DEPLOYMENT AND THE PX STAR CARD

While your Soldier is deployed, the military Star Card provides service members whose account is in good standing two options:

Option 1: A six percent interest rate and the ability to continue to use the account during the deployment period while making no payments.



Option 2: A ZERO percent interest rate during the deployment period, while making no payments. Under this option, no charges can be made against the account during the deployment period.

Revised Army and Air Force Exchange Service Military Star Contingency Deployment Policy

1. This policy addresses the treatment of Military Star accounts while an AAFES Star account holder or AAFES associate is deployed.
2. Deployment is defined as travel to an overseas location in conjunction with a JCS deployment order. The travel must be for at least 90 days.
3. Unit commanders or their representative will notify the Exchange Customer Contact Center by providing a copy of official orders that reference the JCS message that directs support of a JCS deployment order for the unit or an individual.
4. Deployment must be a minimum of 90 days to receive the benefits of this program.
5. No payments will be required for deployed account holders. Additionally, account holders submitted on the deployed listings will automatically have their interest rate reduced to 6%. These customers will still have full charge privileges. If a customer elects **not** to use their account during the deployment, they can receive
6. Customers who prefer not to use their account and receive the additional benefit of a 0% interest rate must contact the Exchange Customer Contact Center by one of the methods listed above. Otherwise, the interest rate will be 6% and the charge privileges remain intact.
7. If a customer is on Check Verification System hold for returned checks, they will not be able to use the account until the checks are paid.

NOTE: Requests submitted by individual service members will not be processed. The unit must submit the request.

The intent of this new policy revision is to provide the military customer with a choice in regards to their Star Card Account. If you have questions regarding this policy or want further information, Contact AAFES: 0800-812-4690, www.aafes.com, or CONUS 1-877-891-STAR.



Filing Taxes When a Service Member is Deployed

Overview

Filing federal and state income taxes during deployment

- Getting started
- Combat zone and hazardous duty deadline extensions
- Getting help with your taxes

Filing state and federal income taxes may be the last thing you want to deal with right now, especially if you or your service member are deployed. But as overwhelming as it may seem, filing your tax return should not be difficult. The Internal Revenue Service has recognized that service members and their families often face special circumstances, and has put in place ways to make this annual obligation less of a burden.

Getting started

If you are a service member or are filing on behalf of one, there are a few things you should know before getting started.

- *File returns in your permanent home state.* If you are stationed somewhere other than your permanent home address, in most cases you will still pay state taxes to your home state. For instance, if your address of record is in Kansas, but you are stationed in California, you will file state taxes with Kansas. Spouses working outside their home of record in most cases will also have to file a state tax return for the state in which they are employed.
- *Access your tax statement online.* As a member of the Armed Forces, you can view and print out your W2 form before it is mailed to you. Go to myPay at <https://mypay.dfas.mil>. You will need your personal identification number (PIN) to access your W2 form.
- *Be sure to have power of attorney if filing for a deployed service member.* Attach a copy of your power of attorney to your tax return. You may use IRS Form 2848, Power of Attorney and Declaration of Representative. The form can be found at <http://www.irs.gov/app/vita/content/military/lesson09/images/2848.pdf>.
- *Find answers to your questions on the IRS Web site.* The IRS has a detailed tax guide for members of the Armed Forces at www.irs.gov/publications/p3/index.html.

Combat zone and hazardous duty deadline extensions

The IRS extends filing deadlines for members of the Armed Forces for the following reasons:

- *You or your spouse are serving in a combat zone or in direct support of those in the combat zone and receive hostile fire or imminent*

danger pay. The deadline for filing income taxes is 180 days after your last day in the combat zone or hazardous duty area. Go to www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=108331,00.html to see a list of combat zones. In addition to the 180 days, the extension includes the number of days left in the filing period when you entered the combat zone or hazardous duty area. The filing period is January 1 through April 15. So, if you or your spouse entered the combat zone on March 31, you would add 15 days to your 180-day tax filing extension.

- *You or your spouse is hospitalized outside of the United States as a result of injuries suffered in a combat zone or hazardous duty area.* The deadline is 180 days after discharge from the hospital. Note that the extension does not apply to the spouse if the service member is hospitalized in the United States.

Your command will have notified the IRS of your deployment to a combat zone but you may want to notify the IRS directly through its special e-mail address. E-mail the deployed member's name, state-side address, date of birth, and date of deployment to combatzone@irs.gov or call the IRS main helpline at 800-829-1040. If the IRS sends a notice regarding a collection or examination, return it to the IRS with the words, "Combat Zone" and the deployment date in red at the top of the notice so the IRS will suspend the action. Write, "Combat Zone" on the envelope as well.

Getting help with your taxes

Service members and their families can get help at many installations through the Voluntary Income Tax Assistance program (VITA). Check with your legal center to see if this service is available at your installation. VITA volunteers will help you file your taxes free of charge. Go as early before the filing deadline as possible to avoid long lines. If you decide to see a private tax preparer, make sure he or she is familiar with the IRS Armed Forces' Tax Guide and has experience filing returns for service members and their dependents. When you go, bring the following with you:

- Military ID
- All W-2 and 1099 forms

- Social Security cards for all family members
- Deductions and credit information
- Bank account and routing numbers (if you choose to receive your refund by direct deposit)
- Receipts for child care expenses
- Last year's tax return, if available
- Special power of attorney authorizing you to do business on behalf of the deployed service member

Before sending in your completed tax forms, double-check your figures and make sure all Social Security numbers are entered correctly. And remember, unless you qualify for an extension, the filing deadline for federal income taxes is April 15. Filing deadlines vary from state to state so check with the local county tax office for the filing deadline in your state.

This article was written with the help of Gordon Genovese, PFM Program Analyst, HQMC; and Patricia Miller, AFC, Community Readiness Technician, RAF Alconbury Family Support Center, UK.

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Understanding your DJMS (Active Component) Leave and Earnings Statement

Defense Finance and Account Service, Cleveland Center, Code PMMF June 2002

DEFENSE FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING SERVICE MILITARY LEAVE AND EARNINGS STATEMENT																							
ID	NAME (LAST, FIRST, MI)				SOC. SEC. NO.		GRADE	PAY DATE	YRS SVC	ETS	BRANCH	ADSN/DSSN	PERIOD COVERED										
	1				2		3	4	5	6	7	8	9										
ENTITLEMENTS				DEDUCTIONS				ALLOTMENTS				SUMMARY											
TYPE				AMOUNT				TYPE				AMOUNT				+ AMT FWD				13			
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O	10				11				12				+ TOT ENT				14						
													- TOT DED				15						
													- TOT ALMT				16						
													= NET AMT				17						
													- CR FWD				18						
													= EOM PAY				19						
	TOTAL				20				21				22				DIEMS		23		RET PLAN		24
LEAVE	BF BAL	ERND	USED	CR BAL	ETS BAL	LV LOST	LV PAID	USE/LOSE	FED TAXES	WAGE PERIOD	WAGE YTD	M/S	EX	ADD'L TAX	TAX YTD								
	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38									
FICA TAXES	WAGE PERIOD	SOC WAGE YTD	SOC TAX YTD	MED WAGE YTD	MED TAX YTD	STATE TAXES	ST	WAGE PERIOD	WAGE YTD	M/S	EX	TAX YTD											
	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49												
PAY DATA	BAQ TYPE	BAQ DEPN	VHA ZIP	RENT AMT	SHARE	STAT	JFTR	DEPN	2D JFTR	BAS TYPE	CHARITY YTD	TPC	PACIDN										
	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62										
Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)	BASE PAY RATE	BASE PAY CURRENT	SPEC PAY RATE	SPEC PAY CURRENT	INC PAY RATE	INC PAY CURRENT	BONUS PAY RATE	BONUS PAY CURRENT															
	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70															
CURRENTLY NOT USED				TSP YTD DEDUCTIONS		DEFERRED		EXEMPT		CURRENTLY NOT USED													
71				72		73		74		75													
REMARKS		YTD ENTITLE				YTD DEDUCT																	
76		77				78																	
www.dfas.mil																							

DFAS Form 702, Jan 02

Your pay is your responsibility. This publication's intended use is as a guide to aid you in understanding the DJMS Leave and Earnings Statement (LES) DFAS Form 702. The LES is a comprehensive statement of a member's leave and earnings showing your entitlements, deductions, allotments, leave information, tax withholding information, and Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) information.

The LES format has been modified for TSP and the REDUX Retirement Plan. These blocks are explained later.

Verify and keep your LES each month. If your pay varies significantly and you don't understand why, or if you have any questions after reading this publication, consult with your disbursing/finance office.

Fields 1 - 9 contain the identification portion of the LES.

- Field 1 NAME. The member's name in last, first, middle initial format.
- Field 2 SOC. SEC. NO. The member's Social Security Number.
- Field 3 GRADE. The member's current pay grade.
- Field 4 PAY DATE. The date the member entered active duty for pay purposes in YYMMDD format. This is synonymous with the Pay Entry Base Date (PEBD).
- Field 5 YRS SVC. In two digits, the actual years of creditable service.
- Field 6 ETS. The Expiration Term of Service in YYMMDD format. This is synonymous with the Expiration of Active Obligated Service (EAOS).
- Field 7 BRANCH. The branch of service, i.e., Navy, Army, Air Force.
- Field 8 ADSN/DSSN. The Disbursing Station Symbol Num-

Field 9 ber used to identify each disbursing/finance office. PERIOD COVERED. This is the period covered by the individual LES. Normally it will be for one calendar month. If this is a separation LES, the separation date will appear in this field.

Fields 10 through 24 contain the entitlements, deductions, allotments, their respective totals, a mathematical summary portion, date initially entered military service, and retirement plan.

Field 10 ENTITLEMENTS. In columnar style the names of the entitlements and allowances being paid. Space is allocated for fifteen entitlements and/or allowances. If more than fifteen are present the overflow will be printed in the remarks block. Any retroactive entitlements and/or allowances will be added to like entitlements and/or allowances.

Field 11 DEDUCTIONS. The description of the deductions are listed in columnar style. This includes items such as taxes, SGLI, Mid-month pay and dependent dental plan. Space is allocated for fifteen deductions. If more than fifteen are present the overflow will be printed in the remarks block. Any retroactive deductions will be added to like deductions.

Field 12 ALLOTMENTS. In columnar style the type of the actual allotments being deducted. This includes discretionary and non-discretionary allotments for savings and/or checking accounts, insurance, bonds, etc. Space is allocated for fifteen allotments. If a member has more than one of the same type of allotment, the only differentiation may be that of the dollar amount.

Field 13 +AMT FWD. The amount of all unpaid pay and allowances due from the prior LES.

Field 14 + TOT ENT. The figure from Field 20 that is the total of all entitlements and/or allowances listed.

Field 15 -TOT DED. The figure from Field 21 that is the total of all deductions.

Field 16 -TOT ALMT. The figure from Field 22 that is the total of all allotments.

Field 17 = NET AMT. The dollar value of all unpaid pay and allowances, plus total entitlements and/or allowances, minus deductions and allotments due on the current LES.

Field 18 - CR FWD. The dollar value of all unpaid pay and allowances due to reflect on the next LES as the +AMT FWD.

Field 19 = EOM PAY. The actual amount of the payment to be paid to the member on End-of-Month payday.

Fields 20 - 22 TOTAL. The total amounts for the entitlements and/or allowances, deductions and allotments respectively.

Field 23 DIEMS. Date initially entered military service: This date is used SOLELY to indicate which retirement plan a member is under. For those members with a DIEMS date prior to September 8, 1980, they are under the FINAL PAY retirement plan. For those members with a DIEMS date of September 8, 1980 through July 31, 1986, they are under the HIGH-3 retirement plan. For those members with a DIEMS date

of August 1, 1986 or later, they were initially under the REDUX retirement plan. This was changed by law in October 2000, when they were placed under the HIGH-3 plan, with the OPTION to return to the REDUX plan. In consideration of making this election, they become entitled to a \$30,000 Career Service Bonus.

The data in this block comes from PERSCOM. DFAS is not responsible for the accuracy of this data. If a member feels that the DIEMS date shown in this block is erroneous, they must see their local servicing Personnel Office for corrective action.

Field 24 RET PLAN. Type of retirement plan, i.e. Final Pay, High 3, REDUX; or CHOICE (CHOICE reflects members who have less than 15 years service and have not elected to go with REDUX or stay with their current retirement plan).

Fields 25 through 32 contain leave information.

Field 25 BF BAL. The brought forward leave balance. Balance may be at the beginning of the fiscal year, or when active duty began, or the day after the member was paid Lump Sum Leave (LSL).

Field 26 ERND. The cumulative amount of leave earned in the current fiscal year or current term of enlistment if the member reenlisted/extended since the beginning of the fiscal year. Normally increases by 2.5 days each month.

Field 27 USED. The cumulative amount of leave used in the current fiscal year or current term of enlistment if member reenlisted/extended since the beginning of the fiscal year.

Field 28 CR BAL. The current leave balance as of the end of the period covered by the LES.

Field 29 ETS BAL. The projected leave balance to the member's Expiration Term of Service (ETS).

Field 30 LV LOST. The number of days of leave that has been lost.

Field 31 LV PAID. The number of days of leave paid to date.

Field 32 USE/LOSE. The projected number of days of leave that will be lost if not taken in the current fiscal year on a monthly basis. The number of days of leave in this block will decrease with any leave usage.

Fields 33 through 38 contain Federal Tax withholding information.

Field 33 WAGE PERIOD. The amount of money earned this LES period that is subject to Federal Income Tax Withholding (FITW).

Field 34 WAGE YTD. The money earned year-to-date that is subject to FITW.

Field 35 M/S. The marital status used to compute the FITW.

Field 36 EX. The number of exemptions used to compute the FITW.

Field 37 ADD'L TAX. The member specified additional dollar amount to be withheld in addition to the amount computed by the Marital Status and Exemptions.

Field 38 TAX YTD. The cumulative total of FITW withheld throughout the calendar year.

Fields 39 through 43 contain Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) information.

Field 39 WAGE PERIOD. The amount of money earned this LES period that is subject to FICA.

Field 40 SOC WAGE YTD. The wages earned year-to-date that are subject to FICA.

Field 41 SOC TAX YTD. Cumulative total of FICA withheld throughout the calendar year.

Field 42 MED WAGE YTD. The wages earned year-to-date that are subject to Medicare.

Field 43 MED TAX YTD. Cumulative total of Medicare taxes paid year-to-date.

Fields 44 through 49 contain State Tax information.

Field 44 ST. The two digit postal abbreviation for the state the member elected.

Field 45 WAGE PERIOD. The amount of money earned this LES period that is subject to State Income Tax Withholding (SITW).

Field 46 WAGE YTD. The money earned year-to-date that is subject to SITW.

Field 47 M/S. The marital status used to compute the SITW.

Field 48 EX. The number of exemptions used to compute the SITW.

Field 49 TAX YTD. The cumulative total of SITW withheld throughout the calendar year.

Fields 50 through 62 contain additional Pay Data.

Field 50 BAQ TYPE. The type of Basic Allowance for Quarters being paid.

Field 51 BAQ DEPN. A code that indicates the type of dependent.

A - Spouse

C - Child

D - Parent

G - Grandfathered

I - Member married to member/own right

K - Ward of the court

L - Parents in Law

R - Own right

S - Student (age 21-22)

T - Handicapped child over age 21

W - Member married to member, child under 21

Field 52 VHA ZIP. The zip code used in the computation of Variable Housing Allowance (VHA) if entitlement exists.

Field 53 RENT AMT. The amount of rent paid for housing if applicable.

Field 54 SHARE. The number of people with which the member shares housing costs.

Field 55 STAT. The VHA status; i.e., accompanied or unaccompanied.

Field 56 JFTR. The Joint Federal Travel Regulation (JFTR)

code based on the location of the member for Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) purposes.

Field 57 DEPNS. The number of dependents the member has for VHA purposes.

Field 58 2D JFTR. The JFTR code based on the location of the member's dependents for COLA purposes. Field 59 BAS TYPE. An alpha code that indicates the type of Basic Allowance for Subsistence (BAS) the member is receiving, if applicable. This field will be blank for officers.

B - Separate Rations

C - TDY/PCS/Proceed Time

H - Rations-in-kind not available

K - Rations under emergency conditions

Field 60 CHARITY YTD. The cumulative amount of charitable contributions for the calendar year.

Field 61 TPC. This field is not used by the active component of any branch of service.

Field 62 PACIDN. The activity Unit Identification Code (UIC). This field is currently used by Army only.

Fields 63 through 75 contain Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) information/data.

Field 63 BASE PAY RATE. The percentage of base pay elected for TSP contributions.

Field 64 BASE PAY CURRENT. Reserved for future use.

Field 65 SPECIAL PAY RATE. The percentage of Specialty Pay elected for TSP

contribution.

Field 66 SPECIAL PAY CURRENT. Reserved for future use.

Field 67 INCENTIVE PAY RATE. Percentage of Incentive Pay elected for TSP contribution.

Field 68 INCENTIVE PAY CURRENT. Reserved for future use.

Field 69 BONUS PAY RATE. The percentage of Bonus Pay elected towards TSP contribution.

Field 70 BONUS PAY CURRENT. Reserved for future use.

Field 71 Reserved for future use.

Field 72 TSP YTD DEDUCTION (TSP YEAR TO DATE DEDUCTION): Dollar amount of TSP contributions deducted for the year.

Field 73 DEFERRED: Total dollar amount of TSP contributions that are deferred for tax purposes.

Field 74 EXEMPT: Dollar amount of TSP contributions that are reported as tax exempt to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

Field 75 Reserved for future use.

Field 76 REMARKS. This area is used to provide you with general notices from varying levels of command, as well as the literal explanation of starts, stops, and changes to pay items in the entries within the "ENTITLEMENTS", "DEDUCTIONS", and "ALLOTMENTS" fields.

Field 77 YTD ENTITLE. The cumulative total of all entitlements for the calendar year.

Field 78 YTD DEDUCT. The cumulative total of all deductions for the calendar year.

Things you need to know...



CAN I TAKE VACATIONS DURING A DEPLOYMENT???

If you leave the area for any reason, it is important to:

- 1) Check the travel advisories in that area
- 2) Tell the Rear Detachment Commander and the FRG know where you are.

There may be an emergency; either in the field or in the states and the unit could need to contact you. This is true whether you go to the states permanently, leave for a short visit, or go to another community in Europe to visit with friends or family.

Use the following form as a guide to what information you should leave when you vacation.

**This is to inform you that I will be out of the area on the dates below.
I can be reached at the following location:**

Name of Spouse: _____

Care of: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Traveling E-mail Address: _____

I expect to return on or about: _____

RED CROSS EMERGENCY INFORMATION

During deployment, if you have an emergency, the Rear Detachment Commander or FRG Leader should be the first person you call for assistance. If neither is available or if you are Stateside, the Red Cross is there to help. If you do not have regular contact with your Soldier, the fastest and most efficient way to notify your spouse of an emergency is through a Red Cross Emergency Message. *You will need specific documentation if requesting your Soldier's return from deployment.* Because emotions can run high during an emergency, have this information at hand before calling your RDC or FRG Leader:

Your Soldier's Social Security number and rank

Your Soldier's company & unit name or where they are deployed to (if you know)

Your company commander's rank and name

A description of the emergency and name of the family member with the emergency

The doctor's name treating the family member with the emergency

The name of the hospital

The phone number where the treating physician can be reached

The phone number where you can be reached

The RDC or FRG Leader should be the first people you call in case of an emergency. If you chose to send a Red Cross message on your own, it is your responsibility to tell the Rear Detachment Commander or FRG Leader immediately afterward. A good team is based on communication.

CASUALTY ASSISTANCE

The military can be a dangerous profession. If there is an incident in which a Soldier is injured, wounded, killed or missing in action there are specific Army procedures in informing the spouse.

First, do not listen to rumors. If you hear a rumor that either your spouse or another Soldier has been injured, wounded, killed or missing in action immediately call the Rear Detachment.

Notification of minor injuries on a deployment will probably be made through the RDC, Family Readiness Group or from a direct call from your service member.

If your spouse is seriously injured or wounded, you will be notified by the chain of command in your Soldier's unit. Do not be fooled by phone calls from people claiming to be medical personnel informing you that your Soldier has been admitted to a certain hospital. Unfortunately, during deployments this trick is sometimes used to lure you from your home in order to rob you.

It is important to realize that a death notification will only come from the command of your Soldier's unit. This notification will be in person. A Soldier in uniform of equal or higher rank usually accompanied by a chaplain will come to your home. Notification will not come from any other source.

After notification of death, a Casualty Assistance Officer will be assigned to you in order to help you manage the benefits to which you are entitled. Don't be afraid to ask questions. The Casualty Assistance Officer is there to answer any questions you may have. If he can't answer your question, he will find an answer for you

The Casualty Assistance Officer will help you make funeral arrangements. The unit chaplain or rear detachment chaplain will be there for your spiritual needs and can also assist in funeral arrangements.

The Red Cross can offer specific help in financial assistance concerning the funeral and assist in notification to other family members serving in the military.

The Army has a commitment in serving you in your time of need.

PERSONAL SAFETY & OPERATIONAL SECURITY (OPSEC)

Even though Europe seems like a very safe place, reports prove that there are terrorist cells all over Germany. During deployment, it is each person's responsibility to keep their family safe by staying alert and using good OPSEC. Here are some suggestions on improving your personal safety:

- Use good judgment-- **Do not advertise that your spouse is gone.** Do not place service member flags, yellow ribbons, or "we miss you" signs around your home or on your car. "Support Our Troops" car magnets and stickers are very popular, but will draw unwanted attention to you when on the economy.
- Do your best to blend in while in public. Do not wear American flags or Yellow Ribbon attire.
- Do not discuss your spouse's absence in public, even with friends, because someone with ill intent may overhear you.
- When someone calls on the telephone and asks for your spouse, **never** tell the caller that your spouse is not home. Tell the caller that your spouse is sleeping or can't come to the phone, and offer to take a message.
- If someone calls and claims to be an official military spokesperson requesting Social Security verification or deployment information, ask them to mail a form to your CMR and you'll return it to them. Then confirm the request with the military agency.

PERSONAL SECURITY

- Keep emergency phone numbers with you when you travel and at home by the phone.
- Always lock your doors and windows; draw your shades at night, and leave a few lights on.
- Leave lights on outside whenever possible.
- NEVER open or crack your door to a visitor who is uninvited or you don't know. Always use your peephole. If they claim to have an emergency, offer to call the MPs for them.
- Do not allow salespeople, repair people, delivery people, or any stranger into your home when you are alone. If you are expecting one, have another person with you, and call the company when the employee arrives.
- Use caution. Remember, neighbors and acquaintances do not come with credentials.
- If you are not certain if someone else may have keys to your home, have the locks changed (consider previous tenants and their friends or neighbors with extra keys).
- Discontinue paper delivery if you will be away. Ask the post office to hold your mail until you return.
- Keep your car in good working order with tune-ups and a full tank of gas. This will prevent your having car trouble and having to depend on strangers for help. Becoming a member of ADAC can give you official roadside help if you ever do have car troubles.

WHEN THE MEDIA CALLS . . .

TIPS ON SURVIVING NEWS MEDIA INQUIRIES

Whenever troops deploy, the media is interested. If the deployment is for a unit training exercise, media interest will be limited to a few local stations or newspapers. However, if the deployment is because of contingency operation such as Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, media from around the world will be out to get a story. Because your spouse is not available or an interview, the media will be looking for you.

There is nothing in military regulations that prohibits you from talking to the media. However, it is something you might want to think twice about doing. Granting media interviews publicize to people from all lifestyles that you are home alone. In addition, once you grant one interview, other media organizations may also begin to search for you.

If you decide to talk to the media, we recommended that you do the interview in a location other than your residence or place of work. Also, you should not talk about your spouse's duties or location. Limit your comments to your own personal opinions and state that it is your personal opinion. Be especially cautious of reporters who want to interview but promise "not to use your name." If you do not want to be bothered by the media or if you want assistance in talking to them contact either your Family Readiness Group Leader or your unit Chain of Concern.

When you talk to anyone, including the media about your spouse's job, it is okay to say that he or she is assigned to the U.S. Army 3rd Corps Support

Command. In most cases, it is even permissible to give the specific company or unit. Providing the spouse's military occupational specialty is also permitted.

You may ask media representatives to leave your property. If they fail to leave after your request, feel free to contact your local police department or military police, if you live on a military installation. However, while the media can be restricted from trespassing on your property, they may still congregate on public property, i.e. the street in front of your house.



Media representatives are not the only ones looking for spouses home alone. Many civic groups or other agencies may search you out, wanting help. It is best to tell them to work through the local Family Readiness Group or your church.

And remember, no matter what the issue; use your unit's Family Readiness Group and Chain of Concern.

If you decide to talk to the media, here are some things to remember:

- You don't have to answer every question.
- If you don't like a question, tell the reporter you prefer not to answer it.
- Don't argue with the reporter. Be polite and firm, but don't get emotional.
- It is your right to stop an interview at any time. If the reporter is rude, stop the interview.
- Deal in known facts. If the reporter says something you know is incorrect, correct him or her.
- Avoid speculating or answering "what-if" questions.
- Don't allow a reporter to rush you. When asked a question, take time and think about your answer.

You may be planning a trip in the coming days or weeks for business or personal reasons. You are likely to enjoy a safe trip to most countries of the world. Airline travel is probably safer than it has ever been, because of security measures taken since September 11. However, during times of war and world uncertainty, it is important to keep in mind that a security situation could deteriorate rapidly, affecting services in the country or place that you are visiting. Planning ahead will help you manage if you experience a delay, can't get a return flight or train, or your personal risk increases due to an emergency.

Plan ahead so you know what to expect

Leaving home will be easier if you plan ahead, gather information, and prepare for the unexpected. For example, it's important to know what to do if your trip is delayed or changed due to world events. These resources can help you make decisions and plans before you leave:

- *Check with the U.S. State Department for up-to-date travel advisories and information.* Go to www.travel.state.gov for country information and travel warnings. If you do not have access to a computer, the State Department, Bureau of Consular Affairs, offers a phone service for travelers on weekdays, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. EST at 888-407-4747. Be prepared to hear a long voicemail. (Don't use this phone line for an urgent matter.)
- *The Overseas Security Advisory Council is probably the best "one stop" site for information on country situations.* In collaboration with the U.S. Department of State and private business, it posts informative summaries of local and political events and their impact on travel and business throughout the world. The Web address is www.ds-osac.org.
- *For information about airport delays due to weather and other factors, go to* www.fly.faa.gov.
- *For detailed country-by-country information, visit the Web site of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom, at* www.fco.gov.uk. See the section on travel for country advice and travel warnings.
- *"Hot spots," an online publication of Air Security International, also has helpful information about travel and travel advisories.* The Web address is www.airsecurity.com/hotspots.htm.

Travel in Times of Terrorism, War and World Uncertainty

- *Many embassy Web sites offer helpful country-by-country profiles and travel information.* Canada's is especially helpful. Go to www.voyage.gc.ca/main/sos/ci/ven.asp.
- *Consult a good book about travel safety.* One good resource is John Grady's Travel Security and Safety Awareness, (Vision Publications, Ltd.).
- *Keep personal papers in a safe place.* Plan to keep all vital documents such as birth and marriage records, vaccination, insurance, and bank records in one accessible location, preferably with your family at home. Make sure that your passport and necessary visas are valid. If you are traveling with your passport, keep a photocopy with you and leave another photocopy with your family at home.
- *Have backup plans in place for child care or if you are caring for an older or dependent relative.*
- *Plan to bring sufficient funds to deal with an emergency.* Cash is best. Carry your bank cash card, travelers' checks, and at least two credit cards as well.
- *Pay for your travel with a credit card.* Ask the company or carrier about policies pertaining to cancellations or changes. Often this information is available on Web sites. If a trip is cancelled, the card issuer will generally return your money. (If cancellation occurs mid-trip, however, there are usually no refunding guarantees.) Purchasing refundable tickets, though more expensive, is also a solution. Notify your credit card company that you will be making purchases in the countries where you are traveling.
- *Register and remain in contact with the consulate office nearest to your destination city.* Obtain this phone number and e-mail address before you leave. Learn who among the officers deals with traveling American citizens. For information about U.S. embassies, see travel.state.gov/links.html.
- *Before you leave, confirm your plans.* Contact your tour operator, travel agent, or airline to confirm travel arrangements and gather more information about

country issues.

- *If you have a choice to accept or decline to travel, make your decision based on what feels comfortable, safe, and right for you.* This is a very personal decision. If you are very worried about the risk of travel, talk with your manager about your concerns and about the possibility of not going. If the State Department recommends refraining from travel due to world events, weigh whether this recommendation is right for you.

Keep in mind that the risk of being a victim of an act of terrorism is extremely low. The fact is that road accidents are the single greatest cause of death for Americans abroad, according to risk experts.

Thinking through your backup plan

- *Be sure your family and close friends know where to reach you during your trip.*
- *Before you leave, consider alternative travel routes.* This includes other airports that could be used for departure and arrival and also other airlines.
- *Avoid taking the airline's last flight of the day.* Continuous delays throughout the day can leave travelers for the last flight stranded.
- *When vacationing, keep your options open.* If you are traveling for pleasure, buy refundable tickets and make hotel and rental-car reservations that can be canceled without penalty. It is easy to make last-minute travel arrangements in most cases, so consider waiting out any concerns or uncertainty you may feel. Note that most cruise companies have liberal cancellation policies.
- *Consider purchasing travel insurance.* Travel insurance to cover cancellation of your trip is a good idea. Supplemental travel insurance to cover the possibility of changes in plans due to terrorism is available from only a few carriers, such as Travel Guard International or Access America/Allianz. If war breaks out, the coverage does not apply. If you are interested in insurance, talk with the broker about the difference in conditions relating to terrorism versus war.
- *In the event of an emergency, find out if your credit card company has services.* Some have a hotline you can use to arrange for medical care, extra cash, etc. Call now to find out.
- *Pack a small emergency or evacuation bag to take with you when you travel.* You will keep this

with you on the airplane or train. The bag should include: water and nonperishable food, a cell phone, photocopies of your passport and exit visa, eyeglasses and/or contact lenses, toothbrush and toothpaste, extra cash, a compact flashlight, and a first-aid kit.

Staying safe when visiting abroad

Be alert and smart about travel in a foreign country. American visitors are welcome in most parts of the world. But a heightened state of awareness is important.

- *Register at the consulate office or embassy.* Introduce yourself to the people with whom you spoke before leaving home. Ask for a country update and any other information that will help you assess any risks to carrying out your travel plans.
- *Carry your personal identification papers on your person at all times.* This includes your passport, driver's license, and any other important documents.
- *Use transportation services provided by the hotel.* Especially for transport to the airport or areas that are unfamiliar to you, use a chauffeured service.
- *Understand the country's phone system.* Carry a calling card and know how it works, or carry exact change in the country's currency. Identify the nearby computer cafés where you can send e-mail to friends and family back home.
- *Avoid gathering at American entertainment spots or restaurants.* Generally, plan to dress as the local people do, be respectful of local customs, and behave in a low-key way. Avoid large crowds of Americans or pubs or places popular with Americans.
- *Contact the consulate office or embassy for instructions during a country emergency.* If events develop in such a way that you become concerned about possible evacuation, be sure to check with the consulate office or embassy. Be sure they know how to reach you.

By planning ahead, having good information about your destination, and being careful and alert about your activities when you are traveling, you will have more peace of mind during the time you are away from family and friends.

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Fear, Hostility Prejudice During Times of War World Uncertainty

Understanding discrimination and what to do if you

A war in the Middle East or in any part of the world raises levels of fear and anxiety in us all. During times of crisis, our fears are heightened, we may feel a sense of helplessness, and there is the natural tendency to want to find something or someone to blame. We want quick answers and conclusions to painful and complex problems. But during times of world uncertainty it's more important than ever to remain clearheaded, in control of your feelings and actions, and not to rush to judgment.

Understanding discrimination

Discrimination -- or the unfavorable treatment of others based on

prejudice -- occurs more frequently during times of war and world uncertainty. Discrimination raises our levels of fear. It can distract us from taking actions that ultimately lead to healing and resolution. It can also have serious legal consequences for those who participate in it. Here are steps you can take to confront discrimination:

- Avoid attributing the acts of violence or terrorism of a few individuals to an entire race, religion, or group of people.
- Avoid listening to or spreading rumors.
- Learn more about people of other races, religions, and cultures. Many acts of discrimination or harassment are a result of a lack of understanding or knowledge

of different cultures. Accurate information about people of other races, religions, political systems, and cultures will help you better understand today's changing world. Read articles from reputable newspapers and magazines and talk with knowledgeable people.

- Try to see people as individuals and not just as members of a cultural, racial, or other group. Avoid stereotypes, which are grossly exaggerated assumptions about a group. Stereotypes can cause mistrust and misunderstandings. Think about your own racial or ethnic background and about some of the negative and incorrect stereotypes others may have of your "group." Consider the many ways you are differ-

Anger, and Anger and Uncertainty experience it.

ent from others who share the same racial, religious, or cultural group identity.

- Examine your own attitudes and feelings about people from other cultures, races, and religions.
 - Do you react to people of different religions, cultures, and backgrounds with openness, respect, and an interest in learning about them?
 - Do you teach tolerance and acceptance of difference to your children?

Understanding and coping with feelings of anger

Many people respond to acts of war or terrorism with anger and other strong feelings. They may

feel anger toward individuals or groups they believe to be responsible for the violence. Feelings of anger are normal. What's important is to cope with your anger in a healthy way. Remember that

- It is never OK to behave with anger or resentment against an individual or group. You may need to talk about your feelings with a trusted friend, family member, or counselor. Expressing your anger toward others verbally or physically is never OK.
- It is never OK to vent your anger toward an individual or a group by mail, over the telephone, or on the Internet. Hate crimes, including those committed in Internet chat rooms or on Web sites, are illegal.
- If you are having trouble managing your anger, seek help. Your human resources (HR) department, employee assistance program (EAP), or employee resource program can provide you with resources and support. If you are not sure how to contact the EAP or employee resource program, find out how to do so from your manager or HR department.
- Channel your anger into efforts to help others. Write letters, make donations, or otherwise become involved with relief efforts. Anger may be caused by feelings of helplessness and frustration. Finding things in your life that you do have control over can be very helpful. One way to take control is to help others.
- If you are a parent, remember that your child is learning powerful lessons from you about how to react in times of war and world uncertainty. A lesson you

want to teach your children is the distinction between feeling angry and acting on your anger. Acting on your anger is not a lesson you want to teach. Instead, help your child understand that it's normal to feel angry and to want to find someone to blame, but focusing efforts on helping others is more important.

What to do if you experience discrimination

If you, a family member, or someone you know experiences discrimination or harassment, seek support. Harassment can include spoken comments, written comments, or behavior that is meant to annoy, disturb, or frighten another person. Acts of hostility and discrimination can threaten your feelings of safety and make you feel vulnerable and alone.

- If you receive hate mail, hate phone calls, or threats outside of work, file a report with the police immediately. Ask that the incident be treated as a hate crime. A hate crime is a violent act against a person, persons, property, or organization because of the group the person identifies with or belongs to. Hate mail and threats can be very frightening and may cause you to want to avoid going to work or other public places. Seek support from family, friends, and your EAP.
- Document the incident. Write down exactly what was said and/or done by the offender. Save evidence -- for example, by taking photographs.
- Follow up with investigators.

Resources

The American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee

4201 Connecticut Ave, N.W; Suite 300
Washington, DC 20008
202-244-2990

www.adc.org

This national, bi-partisan organization fights defamation and discrimination against Arab Americans. Hate crimes and discrimination can be reported through the ADC. The Web site includes information for Arab American parents on talking with children about the war in Iraq.

The Anti-Defamation League

www.adl.org

The ADL is a national organization with regional offices that combat bigotry, prejudice, and discrimination through education; political, legal, and social action; and an active media campaign. The Web site has articles and information about many ADL activities, including tracking hate crimes, activism on college campuses, civil rights, and hate on the Internet.

The Council on American Islamic Relations

453 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20003
202-488-8787

www.cair-net.org

CAIR's goal is to promote a positive image of Islam and Muslims in the U.S. through education and political and social action. The national organization has publications, conferences and seminars, as well as a legal department that handles discrimination cases.

Tolerance.Org

www.tolerance.org

This Web site promotes tolerance and diversity and combats hate discrimination through education, investigation, and litigation. The site has information and articles about different minority groups, talking with children about intolerance during war, and activities for schools and families interested in learning about tolerance.

- If you are ever worried about your safety or your family's safety, contact the police.
- If you receive threatening or offensive phone calls, messages, or e-mail at work, report the harassment immediately to your manager or your HR department. If you are not sure how to approach your manager or HR department, the EAP can help you find support from your company.
- Inform trusted neighbors, family members, and friends about the crime. Neighbors may be willing to keep an eye out for strangers in the area, or unusual events. Friends may be able to provide support in other ways.
- Seek support from community organizations. Contact local support groups, organizations, or your faith community for support.
- If you are concerned that your child may be the victim of discrimination, talk with school authorities about your concerns. Ask for support from your child's teacher, administrators, and the school psychologist. It is important to make teachers and school officials aware of your concerns. Offer to speak with teachers or children to help them learn more about your culture. Urge school officials to look for opportunities to deepen understanding among faculty and students of diverse cultural attitudes and behaviors, and racial and gender stereotyping.
- Talk with your child and allow him to express any fears or concerns he might have. Let your child know that discrimination is wrong. Consider talking with a therapist or counselor if your child is having behavioral problems or trouble coping.

Supporting one another

- Intervene when public discussions or individual actions target a person or minority group. Educate and try to reason with people who are stereotyping or blaming people unfairly. Ask people to recognize the pressures and tension that are present because of world uncertainty, terrorism, and war.
- Be kind to others. Find channels for acts of charity or helping.
- Be sensitive to the needs and issues of people who may be directly affected by the war effort. Make a special effort to express interest and offer support.

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Deployment



THE THREE STAGES OF DEPLOYMENT

THE EMOTIONAL CYCLE OF DEPLOYMENT

The following cycle describes changes in family behavior and emotions during deployments:

Pre-Deployment Stage		Separation Stage		Reunion Stage	
Anticipation of Loss	Emotional Disorganization	Stabilization	Anticipation of Reunion	Readjustment	State of Equilibrium
Frustration Detachment Denial Shock Anger Rejection	Despair Irritability Confusion Loneliness Sleeplessness Overwhelmed by Responsibility	Calm Self-assured Self-assured being alone Detachment Confidence	Joy Excitement Apprehension Expectation Hope	Renegotiation of marriage & family duties Disappointment Ecstasy Change Relief Guilt	Relative Tranquility Shared joy and Responsibility



Feelings exist - they are not good or bad. Therefore, ways of coping can and will vary with each person. Getting ready for deployment starts long before the military member walks out the door.

Many people tend to deny that deployment will actually happen. They fantasize that the plane will break down before the military member can get on it, or that something will happen so their spouse does not have to leave.

Family members may try to avoid the reality of the departure. Suddenly, a small event, a date, or a commonplace happening will trigger an emotion and/or recognition of the fact that the departure is imminent and real.

Military separations include three stages: Pre-deployment, Deployment and Post-deployment or Reunion. Each stage carries unique challenges and tasks for family members. Your family needs time to adjust to these demands. Learning about deployment will help ease the physical and emotional demands on everyone involved: service member, family members, parents, grandparents, siblings, friends and co-workers.

Pre-deployment: The period of time from first notification of deployment until the Soldier leaves home station

Deployment: The duration of time the Soldier is away from home station

Post-deployment (Reunion): The period of time beginning with the Soldier's return to home station until family life returns to normal

THUS, THE CYCLE BEGINS . . .

ANTICIPATION OF LOSS

Preparing for the Mobilization

Your Soldier could also harbor guilt about being *excited* for deployment. Try to understand that as Soldiers, they have been training for deployment their whole career. The upcoming deployment will provide Soldiers a chance to test their skills and be a part of a “real-world” mission.

Detachment and Withdrawal

Remember these feelings and events are normal. Your marriage is not breaking up or going down the tubes. While you are both together in the same house, you are mentally and emotionally preparing for the separation. This is a real and necessary adjustment.

First, the service member and family experience a level of shock, then denial. For example, "I won't say anything,

It's natural for the Soldier and families to both feel:

- A sense of despair.
- A feeling that the marriage is out of control, feeling a desire to separate, to run away to reduce the pain.
- A lack of energy, feelings of fatigue and depression.
- Difficulty in making decisions.
- Ambivalence towards one's partner and sex. It is difficult to be physically intimate when trying to separate emotionally. This should be viewed as a reaction to deployment rather than rejection of each other.
- No longer willing to share thoughts and feelings.

In the days or weeks before leaving, families may experience:

- Difficulty accepting the reality of leaving or separating.
- Feeling an increase in tension; arguments may happen.
- Cramming in of activities/projects - fixing up the house, lawn mower, washing machine, etc.
- Feelings of anger, frustration, and emotional distance between family members.
- Difficulty with intimacy and sexual relations. It is hard to feel warm and loving when feeling angry at each other: "It's easier just to let him/her go" or an increase in such activities may occur, as clinging, fearing the loss of the lover/support person.
- Symptoms of restlessness, irritability, anxiety, feeling an inability to cope, concern about the changes in the home environment that will occur.
- Women may cry unexpectedly and men may withdraw. Allow this to happen, to an extent, as it is essential to release the varying emotions.
- Some couples deny the forthcoming separation by putting off chores, discussions, not facing the inevitable, and procrastinating.
- Feelings of frustrations with changing deployments timelines.

because it may get canceled anyway" or "this won't really affect me/us very much" are forms of denial. Anxiety also rises during this period. The initial shock, denial and anxiety reactions usually last about one to two days, but can linger.

Sadness follows. Sometimes people use bargaining, such as children saying, "I'll do what you tell me if you don't go." Anger and resentment are common experiences just prior to the member's departure.

This reaction makes sense, because it is our human way of adjusting to the loss. Your most likely targets for anger and resentment are the military, your spouse and your children. We use this to protect ourselves from the pain, so if your partner becomes irritable at this point, try to listen and understand.

You can reflect back to your spouse or children the emotions you notice. For instance, if your spouse seems angry, say, "You seem angry." This response gives both of you the opportunity to discuss your

feelings about the deployment.

Remember to talk with your children. They are sensitive to changes in their environment. Remember if they aren't told what is happening, they will use their own fantasies to understand. Children are naturally self-centered, so they blame themselves in their thoughts. Talking to them gives them relief and gives them the chance to ask questions so they can try to understand.

Good planning prior to deployment will help alleviate problems and worries. Discuss and arrange responsibilities and household duties before the military member leaves. Get your children involved in planning for the changes you expect during the separation. Try to spend quality time with close family members before a deployment. Plan a trip or activity, if time allows. It's helpful to have warm thoughts and lasting memories before the service member leaves.

EMOTIONAL DISORGANIZATION

Once the service member is gone, a host of emotions and feelings rise. Loneliness, guilt, frustration, feeling overwhelmed, confusion and fear are most common. Each of these reactions results from the separation, and the Soldier and the family may experience some or all of them. Loneliness comes from the isolation and the loss. Guilt comes from several sources such as having acted irritable or angry before departure. Frustration and feeling overwhelmed come from the realization of what demands the separation places on you. Confusion is common in younger children. Fear is common in all people – such as fear of infidelity, of abandonment and of loss.

Remaining active counteracts these reactions, as does talking to friends and making use of your social support networks like neighbors, coworkers, friends and other family members in similar circumstances.

Listening to your children and avoiding lecturing helps reduce their fears and confusion. Try to keep your children's routines as stable as possible. For instance, keep bedtimes and mealtimes the same. Sometimes children act out their emotions, because they don't have the sophistication to express themselves verbally. They may withdraw, become



aggressive, lie, steal or have nightmares. Some children regress to prior behaviors, such as bedwetting. Some children may have difficulty concentrating and school performance may suffer. Some may lose interest in things, or become more impulsive. These are their means to express themselves, and if questioned, they probably will not be able to explain their reasons.

So, what can you do about the changes in a family member's behavior? Start talking. You can start a conversation with "I've noticed . . ." the most important part of talking to your children will be listening to what they say. You could also ask other parents for advice. If problems persist or are severe, seek assistance through your Family Readiness Group, unit chaplain or other professional.

A few weeks after the member leaves, people often experience sleep difficulties, episodes of crying, irritability and tension. Remaining active, finding a hobby, and focusing on tasks may help you get through this period.

Partners often experience:

- Shock when the deployment actually arrives.
- An initial sense of relief that the pain of saying goodbye is over may be followed by feelings of guilt and emotional turmoil - "If I love him/her, why am I relieved that she/he's gone?"
- Feeling numb, aimless and without purpose as old routines have been disrupted and new ones have not been established.
- Depression and the desire to withdraw from the world, family and friends; Jealousy if a friend's family is still together.
- Feeling of being overwhelmed by responsibility and trying to be everything and do it all.
- Sleep disruption due to loss of security and the support person; tendency to sleep too much (to escape) or too little. Eating disorders may surface or become worse.
- Feeling anger at the military member for not doing more around the home for safety/security reasons.
- Feeling anger at the military for taking the service member away when you needed him/her most.
- Feeling restless, confused, disorganized, indecisive and irritable at everyone, especially the children.
- Feeling guilty for things that didn't (or did) happen before the separation.
- Being "stuck" at this stage can create an unwillingness to move on emotionally and can be detrimental to a healthy adjustment.

LIFE DOES GO ON . . . THE SEPARATION AND STABILIZATION STAGE

At about six to eight weeks after the Soldier leaves, family members start adjusting to the changes. Family rules, roles and responsibilities are often realigned and structural changes adapt to the loss. Families find a new level of functioning without the previous ups and downs.

Families that don't adjust and cope with the separation could experience greater difficulties at this time. Often someone feels depressed.

If you believe you are suffering from depression or

if your family can't seem to adjust, seek help.

You have many options to help you through deployment. Set goals to accomplish during separation. Establish consistent ways to maintain contact, and include the children.

Set one night a week aside for family time. Make sure you give yourself a break each week and allow yourself some privacy. Get involved in activities.

If you feel your energy level is low, do something with a friend, your children or relatives. Even

after the six- to eight-week adjustment period, mood swings may continue. Recognize the roller coaster as normal. If you feel your fears of infidelity rising, express your trust to your spouse. When you identify a problem, tell your spouse about it and what you're doing about it.

The most important thing to remember is to establish and maintain frequent contact. Separation from loved ones and significant others can be stressful and may lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation. Encourage your family to express feelings as early and openly as possible. Especially with children, be sure to offer love and reassurance while discussing future fears or doubts.

Keep lines of communication open and use them frequently. The chapter on communication in this guide has some ideas for ways to communicate. Keeping in touch helps your family feel togetherness.

Often a service member will really be missed. Don't try to fill their shoes. Just do what you can as a family or individual. Share responsibilities with others and be fair and realistic. There are only 24 hours in a day. When things get to be too much, don't be afraid to ask for help. Friends, neighbors, relatives and your Family Readiness Group would be glad to help.

During the Stabilization Stage Most People Begin To:

- Realize at some point, usually midway in the deployment that "Hey, I'm doing OK."
- Establish new family patterns/interactions that do work for them.
- Feel more comfortable with their situation, self, and the reorganization of roles and responsibilities that does occur.
- Attempt and successfully accomplish some goals, which add to self-confidence and feelings of being able to cope.
- Reach out for support through friends, church, work or spouse groups, etc.
- Eat "cruise food" to save time/energy and to appropriately choose priorities - let some things go to have more time.
- Have higher long distance telephone bills - but must learn to keep within the budget.
- Go through the "my" syndrome: my house, my car, kids, etc.
- Appear more mature and independent as "single" spouses since they have developed new activities and accepted more responsibilities to fill the void, while remaining secure in being married.
- Experience more sickness (at first), as the increased responsibilities tend to be more stressful until healthy coping skills are practiced.
- Feel vulnerable due to isolation from the military member, especially if recently moved to a new area without close friends or family.
- Spouses may feel uncertain of their abilities to cope and may experience self-doubt.
- Feel asexual - no longer in need of sex or affection; or feel strangled due to suppressed needs and desires.
- Minor crisis can put person back into the disorganization stage.

ANTICIPATION OF HOMECOMING

Several weeks or days, prior to the military member coming home, family members will begin to feel a sense of anticipation—“He/she’s coming home and I’m not ready!” You and your family will experience anticipation, concern, increased adrenaline and maybe even a drive for perfection. In anticipation, you may worry about the changes that took place during the separation. For instance, “Will my Soldier be happy with how I handled things?” You may notice differences in your phone conversations. How did you each adjust to your greater independence? The Soldier may wonder if he/she is still needed.

How are you doing emotionally?

Strong feelings are most common before and after separation and reunion, but they can occur any time. To help you maintain your emotional health, consider learning new coping skills such as realization techniques, stress management or parenting skills.

Balancing emotions and family relationships during separation is as important as balancing and maintaining control over the household finances. Communicate with your spouse and family about how you’re doing and what help you may need for better stability.

CHILDREN HAVE CONCERNS, TOO . . .

“Will my parent be proud of me?”

“Will rules change again?”

“Will my parent leave again?”

“Will I be in trouble for some of the things I did?”

Talking about these concerns helps children cope with them. One way to get children to talk about their concerns is for you to tell your children one of your concerns, and then ask them about their worries.



LOVED ONES OFTEN:

- Compile a long list of things still left to do and begin to pick up the pace to get things done — a flurry of activity.
- Experience feelings of joy, excitement in anticipation of the military member's return and being together again.
- Experience feelings of fear and apprehension. "Does he/she still love me?"
- Clean the house of activities acquired to fill the void to make room for the Soldier again. Some resentment may be felt at having to give up some of these things, and having to change again.
- Experience uncomfortable feelings like, "I want him/her back, but what will I have to give up?"
- Feel tense, nervous and apprehensive — burying fears/concerns in busy work and activities.
- Experience a sense of restlessness again, but this is generally productive. Some family members may feel confused due to conflicting emotions.
- Put off important decisions until the military member is home again.
- Experience changes in eating and sleeping patterns developed while the Soldier was gone.

THE REUNION STAGE...THE LONG AWAITED HOME

The third and final stage is reunion. This section discusses what you can expect. **Reunion is almost a mirror image of the Pre-deployment stage.** You may find yourself having the ups and downs starting a few weeks prior to the Soldier's return. The adjustment period also lasts about six to eight weeks, possibly longer. Most military families find that reunions are more stressful than the separation. This is generally true with all military members: couples with children, single parents and single Soldiers returning to friends and family.

Renegotiation of the relationship:

The husband and wife are back together physically, but are not emotionally adjusted to being together. They may feel distant, have trouble sharing decisions, and have difficulty talking to each other.

Couples:

- Need to refocus on the relationship, share experiences, feelings and needs, avoid forcing issues.
- Must stop being a "geographically single" person in a relationship and start being a couple again. Go from independence to interdependence.
- May feel a loss of freedom and independence; may feel disorganized and out of control as "deployment routines" are disrupted.
- Need to renegotiate roles and responsibilities. Family members often feel isolated, unwanted, unneeded and left out during this phase, which can cause arguments and hurt feelings for both partners.
- Need to be aware that too much togetherness can cause friction

due to having been apart so many weeks/months.

- Need make "their" decisions together.
- Need to increase their time to talk to each other and their children. They may want to plan special activities of short duration as a couple and as a family.
- Need to progress slowly with ardently desired sexual relations that may fall short of expectations. This can be frightening, and produce intense emotions. Couples may feel like strangers and be hesitant at first about intimate relations. Talk to each other about expectations.
- Need to allow sufficient time to court each other before true intimacy can occur. Get to know each other again.
- May find questions threatening, interpreting the questions as being judgmental, not just curious.
- Should return to the "our" stage ("our" children, "our" house...)

This stage can renew and refresh a relationship, creating new trust and mutual understanding.

Expect To Have Doubts and Worries. . .

Realize that people change, especially children. Increased independence is a positive result of separations. Maintain realistic expectations about the reunion. You may want the first night to be perfect: new clothes, a wonderful meal and a spotless home. If you strive for perfection, you might end up feeling inadequate, irritated, and tired, because perfection is unrealistic.

- Partners may think the other does not need them anymore. Both may

be more confident and independent.

They may be afraid of criticism for the way they have handled things.

- Single parents and single Soldiers may have similar doubts about fitting into the post-deployment environment, especially if they have children who have lived with relatives during the deployment.
- Anxiety is a natural and normal part of getting back together.
- Recognize that you will have these doubts, but don't take them too seriously.

Soldier's Expectations. . .

Don't expect things to be the same as they were when you left. Some things will change, but much will remain the same. Face it: your family has had to continue in your absence. They have changed. Their day-to-day routines have changed. In many ways, it's a different family. If you expect them to be the same, you're in for a rough landing.

- Homecoming is usually not what you expect.
- Take it easy and let things happen naturally.
- Don't count on sexual fantasies being fulfilled.
- Don't try to take over responsibilities immediately. Ease yourself back in slowly.
- Plan a vacation or time away for you and your family within 90 days of return.
- Take some time to readjust to your home, weather, sleep, television and family.
- Offer to help when possible with chores and take care of children.

MECOMING AND THE READJUSTMENT PERIOD

REUNION TIPS

Reunions are a time of readjustment after separation, whether long or short, planned or unplanned. Reunions can be both joyful and stressful because they are a big change that affects everyone with intense emotions. Roles and responsibilities may never return to “Pre-deployment” status. Plan to discuss responsibilities until roles are clearly defined again. The Soldier needs to understand that the spouse has cared for and managed the household for the entire time of the deployment and that they should not expect to automatically resume the role they had. It would be unrealistic considering the time and effort put into surviving the separation.

Make it Easier for the Children

- Give the children time to adjust. When a parent has been away, it takes a while to remember and accept the parent again. Young children may also be mad at a parent for leaving them. Babies going through the “stranger anxiety” stage may be afraid of a parent they've not recently seen.
- Expect them to test limits and to have a variety of emotions. Plan family time.
- Plan individual time for the child with the returning parent.
- Children should stay involved with school activities and interests and not drop everything because the Soldier has returned.

Tips for the Spouse who Remained Home

- Expect your Soldier to be different. Think how much you have changed. Do not expect things to be perfect.
- Remember they have been subject to daily regimentation and routine during deployment. The returning service member may rebel against schedules and preplanned events. Leave some room for spontaneity.
- The returning Soldier might not have been behind wheel of a car for quite a while. Go ahead and drive for them if they wish.
- Expect them to have difficulty sleeping for a while. The Soldier will have become accustomed to a different life style and perhaps a different time zone. They may be used to being “on the go” 24 hours a day. It may take a week or two to adjust to a slower pace.
- Expect your Soldier to be surprised or hurt that you've coped so well alone. You can reassure them that they are loved and needed, without giving up your own independence.

- Don't be defensive about the way you've handled the children. Discuss any criticisms calmly.
- Expect to take time to re-establish sexual intimacy.
- Encourage the service member to take days off to relax. It's a tremendous relief for them to feel secure and safe.
- Expect to make some adjustments. Though you're looking forward to the Soldier's return, it may be a challenge for him/her to adjust to changes in where they sleep and for how long; what and when to eat; the people you see; and what you do for fun.

Tips for the Service Member

- When you arrive back home, be patient and expect some changes.
- You are entering an environment that you've been absent from for some time. Don't expect to walk in and return to how things were. Give your family and yourself time to readjust. Maintaining stability when you left was important and it's important again during the reunion. Let the adjustments come naturally; If you force changes, your family will resist your efforts. Ask them to tell you what they expect from you and you can express what you expect from them.
- Support positive changes. Show pleasure and interest in how your family has grown.
- Take it easy on the kids, especially where discipline is concerned. It's best for the kids to have a constant routine, so let the current rules stand.
- Don't try to alter the financial affairs immediately. Chances are, your spouse has been handling them fine. Remember that prices have probably increased while you were gone. (If something expensive can break, chances are it will happen when you are deployed.)
- Don't ask your partner to pack the kids off to Grandma's so the two of you can have an intimate reunion. It's vital to reaffirm your bond with your children. Later, the two of you can slip away for a “second honeymoon.”
- Expect your spouse to be different. Many spouses are more confident and independent. The fact that they can cope without you doesn't mean they want to!
- **ABOVE ALL - TALK WITH YOUR LOVED ONES!** Communication is the basis of healthy and growing relationships.

THE READJUSTMENT PERIOD

Accept and Share Your Feelings...

Communicate...Communicate...Communicate

- Sharing requires a lot of talking and listening.
- Active listening means to really listen, not thinking about how to defend yourself or what you'll say next.
- If you need to clarify what was said, repeat it in your own words. When you understand, respond thoughtfully.
- You may have to renegotiate your relationship.

Some Tips for Homecoming

MAKE IT SPECIAL. Plan a celebration (if your service member agrees to it) but keep your expectations realistic.

STAY FLEXIBLE. He/she may be very tired. Leave room for changes.

STAY CONFIDENT. Even though your loved one may act differently, he/she is still the same person!

NEGOTIATE ACTIVITIES. Make time for everyone's favorite activities. Ask everyone for ideas.

MAKE INDIVIDUAL TIME. It's important for spouses to spend time together without family or friends.

BE PATIENT AND ADJUST GRADUALLY. Don't expect everything to happen at once. Readjustment can take weeks. Start with small changes and make them slowly. Large or rapid changes in roles are often a shock for the whole family.

RE - THINK YOUR BUDGET. Costs will be different with the service member home, and pay may change too. Set realistic goals, stick to your budget, and avoid over-spending.

- You have changed; your Soldier has changed; and your children have changed. If you expect them to be the same, you're in for a hard time.
- Do not criticize each other for doing things differently.

Try To See Things from the Other's Point of View...

- Once the family member realizes that the Soldier no longer feels a part of the family, they will understand why the Soldier is sensitive about even the smallest changes.
- Once the Soldier sees the family member's pride in the way he/she handled everything alone, the Soldier will understand why they get upset when the Soldier comes barging in to take over.

These principles apply when dealing with each other and with children.

- Don't push yourself on your loved one.
- Spend one-on-one time with them.
- Be patient.
- Cut them some slack when they're acting up—they are a little stressed out, too.

The returning service member may want things to go back to how they were before the separation. That normally doesn't happen. People grow and change, so the family structure, while adjusting to the reunion, finds a new level of functioning. The service member may feel like an outcast. For instance, the children may no longer seek the returning parent's advice for help with things. Remember that your family had to change to survive so give them time and space to readjust. Things and changes will be unfamiliar. You'll need time to get reacquainted. Intimacy takes time to develop with family members and friends. Go slow and take time to get to know each other



again. Schedule time for a family activity, dates with your partner and individual time with each child.

Take Time Off From Work to Decompress and Reacquaint, whether Active Duty or Reservist

If possible, it is important for reservists to take some time off between the redeployment and re-entering the civilian workforce. Not only do reservists have to renew their family relationships, but they must also readjust to the return to work and the changes that have occurred while they were gone. Don't try to do it all at the same time. Prepare yourself for returning to civilian work. It could be possible that you may not feel the same sense of satisfaction or purpose as they did when deployed. Be prepared for this and other feelings of misplacement.

If problems persist or your family takes more than eight weeks to readjust, get help.

State of equilibrium

Reintegration and Stabilization

Sometimes within four to six weeks after homecoming, partners have stopped referring to "my" car, house, kids,



and return to using "we" or "our" and military members feel more at home, needed, accepted, and valued.

- New routines have been established and the family has adjusted to them.
- Both partners are feeling more secure, relaxed and

A HAPPY HOMECOMING Preparing For a Happy Homecoming

Talking about your feelings is an important part of preparing for a happy homecoming.

Spouses may wonder: How much has my partner changed? Have I made good decisions about our money? Did I do OK with the kids? Will I have to stop seeing my friends so much? Will we still have things to talk about?

Service members may wonder: Will my family still need me? Will the kids recognize me? How did things go while I was gone? Will they be happy to see me?

Children wonder, too: Will Dad (or Mom) come to meet my teacher? Will I be punished because I wasn't nice sometimes? Will the rules change at home? How long will Mom (or Dad) stay?

The single most important way to help ease the tension is to maintain communication throughout the separation. Talk about feelings and expectations, and be honest. Talk about changes and how roles, interests, and friends have changes. The old problems have not gone away. For instance, if you and your partner disagreed about how to squeeze toothpaste from the tube before the separation, chances are you'll continue to disagree about it for the next 40 years. Keep your expectations realistic.

comfortable with each other.

- The couple and family are back on track emotionally and can enjoy warmth and closeness to each other.

There can be numerous variations to the cycle. Short deployments can be disruptive when there is not enough time to get used to the Soldier being gone or home. Trying to say, "Hello" and "Good-bye" at the same time is especially difficult. Unexpected changes can also be very difficult to deal with for all concerned; like, when dates for leaving or coming home are ambiguous or unknown.

COPING STRATEGIES - THE 4 M's

MAINTAIN

- Stay in good physical condition.
- Eat balanced meals.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Keep in touch with positive people.
- Avoid things that make you feel worse.
- Avoid spending sprees, but treat yourself to a special outing.
- Don't make any life changes during this time.

MANAGE

- Manage your life. Set goals.
- Start a project that you've put off. Begin a self-improvement program or go back to school.
- Set time to be away from the children so you can take care of yourself.
- Continue your spiritual growth.
- Become involved in community activities that interest you.
- Travel – New scenery and a change of pace can do wonders for the spirit.
- Become a volunteer.
- Know your limits.

MONITOR

- Be aware of early signs of stress.
- Laugh: Don't lose your sense of humor.
- You are only human – ask for help if you need it.

MANEUVER

- Relieves stress – try relaxation exercises.
- Use coping strategies that work for you.
- Stop and smell the roses.

COPING WITH SEPARATION

Deployment periods provide for a time of self-growth. For most families, a deployment isn't the happiest of occasions. Long separations are hard on every member of the family, especially those left at home. As Army families, we learn to cope. Experience has shown that a deployment is much easier on families if they prepare for it and know the tricks of getting along during separation. Take advantage of the military support. Stay informed - get involved with your FRG. Nobody understands the Army like another Army family. By following some of these suggestions, deployments might go a little easier for your family.

Hints for the Family Member

KEEP IN TOUCH! Communicate with the Soldier by e-mail, if possible, AND by writing, even if it is only a post card to say, "I love you and miss you". Soldiers love mail and need to hear from home frequently.

- Contrary to popular belief, in the case of family separation, "no news can be bad news!"
- Be sure to write regularly and to use the correct mailing address.
- Other address information will be issued by the unit, or if known, at the pre-deployment briefing. FRG contacts will also know this information, if it's published.
- Keep in mind that if your Soldier is far from home...
 - Plan ahead.
 - Be aware of the possibility of mail arriving late.
 - Mail may be slow.
 - Money may not arrive according to schedule.
 - Important documents may arrive too late to meet deadlines.
- To reduce worries when you haven't heard from your Soldier, you can get information from the FRG on:
 - Where he/she is (if able to be known)
 - How he/she is doing
 - The TRUTH about rumors
 - Their return Home

For information, call your unit Point of Contact or your Key Caller in your Family Readiness Group.

THE BLUES AND HANDLING STRESS

When the Blues Get Bluer

Most families find the Holidays, dinner hour and Sunday afternoon the times they miss their family member the most. In addition, almost everybody has an occasional blue Monday. If your blue days are increasing in frequency, pay attention to what is going on around you and *in* you. Are you:

- Feeling Depressed?
- Losing interest in hobbies or things you enjoy?
- Feeling like you don't have energy to do things?
- Gaining or losing weight?
- Yelling at others or feeling irritable?
- Sleeping in later, having trouble falling asleep or experiencing frequent awakenings?
- Withdrawing from people?
- Finding it difficult to concentrate?
- Spending a lot of time with your thoughts?
- Drinking more than usual or drinking alone?
- Having thoughts of suicide?

Depression is a side effect of separation that happens to some of us. Some use alcohol and drugs as a remedy, but it doesn't work. Drinking does nothing to answer life's problems.

The cure for depression is the same as prevention. Take positive action. Change your thoughts to change your feelings and reactions. Find something to do, and don't let yourself feel stuck in the house. If you can, talk to a friend. If you're alone, out of sorts and problems seem overwhelming, seek help through your Family Readiness Group, the unit chaplain or another professional.

YOU CAN DO IT! When a loved one is away, you also need to get the sense you are moving up and forward. Frustration comes when you see others accomplishing things, while you are immobile, waiting for your family member to return. If you have met with success before, you can do it again.

If you feel that you are truly unable to handle the stress of deployment and could possible harm yourself, your children or another person, **SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP IMMEDIATELY!**

HANDLING STRESS

- Take care of yourself.
- Make daily schedules of things that need to be done, but be reasonable.
- Get involved in things that make you happy.
- Avoid self-medication and abusing substances like drugs, alcohol, caffeine, nicotine and food. Liquor and drugs reduce the perception of stress, and they don't reduce stress itself.
- Be flexible; accept that you can't control everything.
- Plan for stress. Set realistic goals that leave time for breaks and limit work. Take a stress reduction class.
- Keep a sense of humor at all times.
- Start thinking about what you really want out of life and begin to work towards those goals.
- Take a mental health day every two or three months.
- Avoid sulking. Let people know what you want.
- Learn how to express irritation and appreciation to others.
- Pick out somebody you work with and tell them something about yourself that you haven't told anyone else.

Coping with the Deployment of a Spouse or Partner

Ways to cope when a family member has been deployed

Maintaining a family routine and tending to your needs or the needs of family members can be very difficult when a spouse or partner has been deployed. You may experience separation anxiety, fear, anger, loneliness, and other strong emotions during the deployment of your spouse. By knowing what to expect, learning to recognize the signs that you are having trouble coping, and knowing where to turn for help, you may be able to make this difficult time a little easier.

Coping during a deployment

There are several stages of emotion you may go through when your spouse or partner has been deployed. When they first learn about a deployment, many people begin thinking about what it will be like to live without their partner, which may cause feelings of confusion, anger, resentment, or depression.

If you experience any of these emotions, you can

- talk to your spouse about your feelings

ings

- work to create opportunities for lasting memories during the separation
- talk with other people from your military community who are going through the same experience
- involve your entire family in getting ready for the deployment

As the time of departure comes closer, some people may begin to feel detached or withdrawn. Feelings of hopelessness, impatience, and a decrease in emotional or physical closeness are all common reactions to an impending deployment. When a loved one leaves, family members may go through a difficult adjustment period. On the “up” side, many people feel an increased sense of independence and freedom. The “down” side could include periods of sadness and loneliness.

If you have trouble adjusting to the absence of a spouse or partner, you can

- Try to find things to look forward to. Take a class, volunteer, or start a project you’ve always wanted to do.

Spouse

When a family member is deployed.

Set some personal goals for yourself during the deployment period and be open to new experiences and friendships.

- Reach out to others who are in the same situation. Remember that you are not alone. Plan an event with other families who are coping with a deployment or find a support group through your military community.
- Don't try to hide your feelings. It's normal to feel sad, lonely, or angry when you've been separated from your spouse. You don't have to hide these feelings -- that may just make it harder to deal with them. Talk about how you feel with people whom you trust.
- Do something special for yourself and your family. Rent a movie or cook a meal that your spouse wouldn't necessarily enjoy. Plan fun outings with children during free time. Make time to read a book you've been wanting to read or visit with a friend.
- Try to concentrate on the things you can control. It's normal to worry about your spouse's safety during a deployment or about when he or she will come home, but this is something that you can't control. Try to focus on things that you can control, like spending time with family and

friends or signing up for a class or volunteer opportunity.

- Ignore rumors. The military may not be able to give detailed information about the whereabouts and activities of specific units during a deployment. Without that kind of information, rumors and gossip can get started. It may be difficult to ignore rumors or gossip, but you'll be much better off if you do. Rely on official sources of information when a family member has been deployed.
- Learn some stress management techniques that work for you. The stress of living without your partner can take a toll on the way you feel and think. Try out some different ways to relieve stress, such as an exercise class, keeping a journal of your thoughts and feelings, or practicing meditation or deep breathing.
- Seek support from your faith community. Many people find comfort and solace from their faith communities during difficult times.
- Take care of yourself. Get enough sleep and exercise and eat healthy meals.

Asking for help

Ask for help when you need it. Asking for help isn't a sign of weakness -- it's a sign that you care about yourself and your family. Don't be afraid to ask friends or family to help with the household, child care, elder care, or anything else you need.

Seek professional counseling. If you're having trouble coping, feel overwhelmed by the job of managing everything on your own, or if you're feeling blue or depressed much of the time, you may benefit from speaking with a professional counselor. Contact your family service center for help finding a counselor.

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The deployment of a family member can be a very emotional and difficult time for many families. But by doing everything you can to get yourself and your family ready, you may find that you are better able to cope throughout this challenging time. Families who know when a loved one is scheduled to be deployed should prepare as soon as possible by talking to children and extended family members about what will happen during deployment, adjusting their routines, and reviewing financial and legal details.

Preparing for Deployment: The Home Side

Tips for preparing for the deployment of a family member

Emotional preparations

Separation from a spouse or partner is hard, whether it's for six weeks or six months. If you know what to expect and come up with a plan for taking care of your household and yourself, you can be better prepared to handle the strong emotions that often come with a deployment.

Everyone reacts to the news of a deployment differently. You may feel

- angry
- sad
- confused
- nervous
- a strong sense of denial

Some people may also start to withdraw from their spouse or partner to try and make the transition easier. All of these are normal reactions to a deployment. But there are things you can do to feel better and get ready. You can

- Find out as much as you can about the deployment. Where will your spouse be? How long will the deployment last? By learning as much as you can about where your partner will be and what he or she will be doing, you may be able cope better with feelings of uncertainty. Try to remember that in some cases, you may not be able to get as much information as you'd like because of security issues.
- Agree on a plan for communicating. Find out how you'll be able to communicate. Talk about whether you'll stay in

touch by telephone, e-mail, or letters, and how often or at what times you'll communicate. Will you be able to send a letter or email each day, or will it be once a week? How soon can you expect to get a response?

- Make a plan for being alone. Family members who are at home while a loved one is serving in the military may be able to deal with anxiety and fear if they make plans to take classes, pick up new hobbies, or spend time doing things they wouldn't normally do. Set some personal goals to work toward during the deployment.
- Talk about your feelings with your partner and encourage him or her to do the same. Share your fears and concerns about the deployment and work together to come up with a plan for handling them.
- Find support for yourself. Many branches of the service offer support in the form of social groups, counseling, or advice. Look into what's available for you as a military family member.
- Reach out to other people who are going through or have already gone through a deployment. Participate in any predeployment activities offered by your unit. Military families who have already experienced a deployment may have valuable tips and advice about handling the separation. By reaching out to other people who are preparing for a deployment, you may be able to build a support system for the coming weeks or months.
- Spend special time together as a couple and as a family. Take the time to be alone with your spouse or partner before they leave. It's also important for children to have individual time with a parent in the days leading up to a deployment. Make time to be together as a family even if it's just for an ordinary activity like taking a bike ride or playing a game.

Preparing your home and life for deployment

The absence of a family member may mean that you'll have to do things differently at home and in the rest of your life. If you take the time to prepare for these changes, you may find it easier to adjust. Here are some things you should think about when you're preparing for deployment:

- Review child and elder care arrangements. If you need help covering your child or elder care needs, contact any services that may be available to you through the military, in your community, or through another employer for support and resources. If you already have a child care plan in place, review it to make sure that the absence of a family member will not be a problem.
- If there are certain chores or duties that the deployed family member always does, make sure you know how to do them, too. In some families, one person is responsible for maintaining the car or for grocery shopping. If this is the case in your family, make sure you feel comfortable taking on that responsibility on your own.
- Update and check legal and financial documents and details. This should include updating wills and medical directives, creating powers of attorney documents, and ensuring that family members have access to accounts and documents.
- Make sure all important contact numbers are easy to find. Gather information about how to reach the deployed family member, including numbers for contacting appropriate military officials for information and updates. Make sure you also know how to contact your spouse's family.
- Create a family emergency plan. Talk about what you'd do in the case of an emergency, including where you'd go and how you would get in touch. Involve children and other family members in these discussions in appropriate ways.
- Talk about how you'll handle finances during the deployment. If your deployed spouse typically takes care of the family finances, make sure that you feel comfortable assuming these responsibilities. Make sure that you agree on a plan for accessing and using all checking, savings, or investment accounts as well as safety deposit boxes. Go over all bills that will need to be paid during the deployment period, including taxes. If it's necessary, make arrangements for the direct deposit of the paycheck of the person who will be deployed.

Helping children prepare for deployment

It's important to involve children in the preparations for deployment and explain to them exactly what a deployment involves in a way that they will understand.

You may also want to

- Go over the "house rules." Explain to your child that rules will not change during the deployment just because a parent or family member is gone. Enlist older children to help around the house by taking over a chore or duty that the missing parent or family member always did.
- Encourage younger children to talk with older children who have already been through a deployment. If you don't have older children, help your child make connections with the children of relatives, friends, or other military families who are familiar with deployment.
- Make time for the family member or parent who will be deployed to spend "alone time" with each child in the family.
- Take lots of pictures or make videotapes of your child and the parent who will be deployed doing everyday activities. Document ordinary things, like getting ready for bed, reading a story, eating dinner, or playing a game. Put these pictures in a small album for your child or display them somewhere your child can easily see them. Many families also make recordings of the parent or loved one who will be deployed reading favorite stories so that children can listen to their voices when they are gone.
- Give your child a special gift before the deployment begins. This could be anything -- a diary, a scrapbook, a watch, or a bracelet -- as long as it's something your child can hold and look at when she's missing her parent or family member.
- Make sure your child understands that he or she will be able to stay in touch with the deployed parent or family member by writing letters, talking on the phone, or sending recordings or drawings. Sometimes children have trouble understanding the idea of a temporary separation, and they may think that they won't be able to talk to or communicate with their deployed loved one.
- Come up with a way to count down the time that the parent or family member will be gone that children can understand. Some families create calendars and mark off the days while others may come up with other ideas like filling up a jar with a chocolate or a sticker for each day the loved one will be gone. If you're not sure how long the parent will be gone, you can mark the passage of time by making a paper chain and adding a link each day that the parent is gone, then use the chain as a decoration when they return.

The time you spend preparing for a deployment pays off down the road. You'll find that you are better able to handle the stress of the separation and take care of yourself and your family.

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Coping with a Deployment Extension

A deployment extension is difficult for service members and their families. You've been anxiously looking forward to your loved one's return home only to find that your reunion plans must suddenly be put on hold. While there is no denying that this is a difficult period, there are things you can do to cope as a family and get through this time together with a positive attitude. That, after all, is what your service member would want you to do.

How you may feel

An extended deployment creates hardship for families. From the moment you receive the news of the extended deployment, you may experience a flood of emotions, including feelings of sadness and disappointment, worry and anxiety; some feelings of anger; and a sense of betrayal or of promises being broken. Your hopes were up and your spirits were soaring as you thought about your forthcoming reunion. Now you must regroup and gear up for more months of coping as a family while your loved one is away on active duty. Experts agree that a deployment extension is often harder on families than it is on service members.

During this difficult time, you may find it helpful to remember the following:

- The emotions you are feeling are normal. There is no getting around the fact that a deployment extension brings strong emotions and feelings of stress. You may feel flooded with feelings and overwhelmed for days or even a few weeks until you have had time to adjust to the news.
- You are not alone. Military family life is a life of constant change. There are schedule changes, family separations, and extended deployments. Active duty service members understand this reality when they enlist for military life. For Guard and Reserve families, however, a deployment extension can feel more unexpected. The more you talk with others in your situation, the easier this time will be and the less alone you will feel. Participation in family readiness groups is a good way to stay connected.

Coping as a family

A deployment extension affects your family's plans, schedule, and routines. Here are some suggestions on coping during this time:

- Give yourself time to regroup emotionally. Admit to yourself that you are upset. Your feelings are genuine. They reflect your disappointment and pain. Even though you didn't cause the situation and may feel a bit out of control, try to avoid taking your legitimate frustrations out on your friends, relatives, or children, who, like yourself, didn't cause the situation. You might want to take an evening off from your regular activities to do something special for yourself. It doesn't have to cost a lot of money. It might be visiting a friend you don't get to see much. Getting away for a day or half a day will do you some good.
- Help your children handle the news by talking about it with them and offering extra love and support. Discuss the extension news in an open, honest manner with your children. Keep your children informed about the change of events and explain what information you have in words your children can understand. Tell your child that unexpected changes sometimes happen and that you will keep them up to date on those changes. Reassure your child that you will all be together soon.
- Tell your child's teacher about the deployment extension and any updates. It's good to keep teachers and other adults in your child's life in the loop.
- Share your feelings as a family. Allow children to discuss their feelings, questions, and concerns. Encourage any questions they may have regarding the extended deployment. Listen and do your best to understand.
- Get back into a routine as soon as possible.
- Focus on the future by beginning to make new plans. The deployment extension changed plans you may have had for a reunion. You may have had a vacation planned, a special reunion with extended family members, or a celebration involving close friends

and relatives. Some things you will be able to put off; others you may not. You may need to make new plans altogether. When you are ready, organize and plan for a new reunion with your loved one. It will give you and family members something positive to focus on.

- Keep things in perspective. As difficult as a deployment extension is, it helps to keep things in perspective and to remember that many military families face even greater hardships. Some have had a service member return home only to have him or her be shipped back out to a combat zone for another year's service. As hard as this time is, try to see the light at the end of the tunnel and remind yourself that your wait will soon be over.
- Limit exposure to television or other sources of information about the war and its victims. Especially for children, it can increase feelings of fear and anxiety.
- Army personnel (Active, Guard, and Reserve) and their families and Marine Corps personnel and their families in the United States and Puerto Rico are encouraged to take advantage of free, private, face-to-face counseling services in their local communities. Counselors help adults and children with issues such as marital and family stress, reunions after deployment, grief, and other common problems associated with military life. You may receive up to six counseling sessions per problem per person, and there are no claims to file. Army personnel and their families contact Army One Source at 800-464-8107. Marine Corps personnel and their families contact MCCS One Source at 800-869-0278.

Handling practical matters

There may be financial and other practical matters to attend to during a deployment extension, including mounting bills and a reduced income, especially for Reserve families. You will reduce feelings of stress if you take care of these matters as soon as you are able. Here is a list of reminders:

- Be sure the service member contacts his or her employer. Guard and Reserve members expected back at work will need to notify their employers about the deployment extension. Employers are mandated by law to hold a mobilized Guard or Reserve member's job for up to five years (There are some exceptions.)

For more detailed information, contact the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve by calling their toll-free number at 800-336-4590, or by visiting their Web site at www.esgr.org. Some employers will need a hard copy of the extension orders as proof to secure reemployment rights.

- Notify creditors. Often credit card companies, banks, and other financial institutions will reduce interest rates during a deployment and a deployment extension under provisions of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act. To take advantage of this benefit, you will need to contact your creditors to let them know that your spouse has been extended on active duty and submit the required paperwork and documentation. Contact your unit or installation legal assistance office for more information. To learn more about the Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act go to www.esgr.org.
- Seek advice or assistance if you have financial concerns resulting from the extended deployment. You may have financial issues to take care of as a result of the extended deployment. If you made vacation plans, for example, to celebrate the service member's homecoming, you may be able to get a refund on tickets or deposits by explaining the circumstances. There may also be bigger issues to take care of, such as what to do about a lease that is expiring or how to get through the next several months of expenses on a reduced income. For help reviewing your financial situation and coming up with a plan, you might contact the service that brought you this article. A consultant can give you information on such matters as health insurance coverage, housing options, and how to apply for mortgage assistance from your lender. Contact the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve by calling their toll-free number at 800-336-4590. Installations also have financial counseling services. In the Army, for example, there are Army Community Service centers that have a financial counselor.
- Remember that emergency help and relief are available through the military. Every branch of the military has a relief organization for members needing emergency help or relief. There are low-interest loans, grants, and donations available to service members and their families, as well as help with transportation, child care, food, rent, utilities, and unforeseen family emergencies. For information on assistance options, contact your service branch:

- Army Emergency Relief (www.aerhq.org/)
- Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (www.nmcrrs.org/intfree-loan.html)
- Air Force Aid Society (www.afas.org/)
- Coast Guard Mutual Assistance (www.cgmahq.org/)

If you live far from an installation, remember that assistance is available through the Red Cross. To find your local chapter, go to www.redcross.org.

Taking care of yourself

Once you have had some time to get used to the news of the deployment extension, and to helping others cope, take some time to focus on yourself.

- Give yourself a break to compensate in some way for all you are doing and will need to keep doing in the months ahead. Have a meal out with a friend. Take a day off of work if you can. Schedule a break for yourself, even if it's just a small treat like having your hair done, or going out for ice cream with a friend.
- If you have young children at home, seek support from others so you get a break from parenting. You were expecting your spouse home any day and were mentally prepared for a break and an extra set of hands around the house. Now you will have to postpone that break several more weeks. To tide yourself over, share babysitting or child care with a friend so you get some relief. Ask a relative to come stay with you for a few days or weeks if possible. Or go visit a relative or close friend with

your children.

- Keep busy and stay connected to others. Get together with relatives and friends for potluck dinners, card games, or having a picnic with children.
- Talk with people who have been through deployments. They may have valuable suggestions and helpful ideas on how to get through this time. Talking to someone who has been through it or who is just a good listener always helps you feel better.
- Take advantage of the support services and programs available to you through the military. The military has many support services for families of active duty members. This includes information, counselors, the installation chaplain, family support groups, online support groups, and organizations and clubs for spouses, such as the Key Volunteer Network. Reserve families should contact their unit family readiness group or chaplain; they can also utilize all of the services of their nearest installation. Resources and information are available as well through the service that brought you this article.

Supporting your service member

The best way to support your service member is to stay strong as a family and to gear up to get through the coming months until you are together again.

- Send a letter or email as soon as possible. Because you were expecting your service member home, you may have stopped writing in recent days or weeks. With the extension, your service

member may be without mail or word from home. You don't want him or her to go without mail for weeks. So that there isn't a gap of support, send a letter or an email, if possible, as soon as you can.

- Write often to your service member.
- Make plans for a new reunion. You might create a new family calendar counting down the days until your loved one returns home. Share plans about the reunion with your service member. It will give you all something positive to focus on.

Written with the help of Dr. Walter R. Schumm, Retired Army Reserve Colonel and professor of family studies and human services at Kansas State University. He is the author of numerous publications on military family life.

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WHEN YOUR SON OR DAUGHTER IS DEPLOYED

Ways to cope when your son or daughter is deployed

A son's or daughter's deployment can stir up conflicting emotions in a parent. While you are proud of your service member's accomplishments, you may be concerned for his or her safety, especially if the deployment is to an area of conflict. It's important to keep in mind that your son or daughter is capable, trained, and well equipped to carry out his or her mission. Also remember that the best thing you can do for your son or daughter is to offer your support and encouragement.

Preparing for deployment

Before your son or daughter deploys discuss a plan for staying in touch. You should know:

- *The address to send letters and care packages.* The address should include your service member's full name (with or without rank or rating), unit, and APO/FPO (Air/Army Post Office or Fleet Post Office) address. Be sure you have the unit name, including the battalion, ship, squadron, platoon, etc.
- *Your service member's social security number.* Keep this handy in case you have to find your son or daughter in an emergency.
- *If your son or daughter will have e-mail access.* If so, don't expect instantaneous communication. Depending on where your service member is stationed, email may be sporadic.
- *Roughly how long before your letters and/or e-mails will be answered.* While it's impossible to say for certain, your service member may be able to tell you that he or she will be so busy during the first few weeks that there may be little time to write.
- *Whether you will receive phone calls, and if so, roughly how often and for how long.*
- *How you can get information about your son's or daughter's unit.* Find out from your service member's base command whether any of the following options are available to you:

- *Command and unit newsletters.* These may be online or in hard copy. To be included on the distribution list, your service member will need to provide your information to his or her unit.
- *Phone trees.* Volunteers at home pass along information to family members from the command.
- *Volunteer family support groups.* Each branch of the armed forces offers support networks for families, though support for parents of deployed service members varies according to the policies of the unit. Depending on your service member's branch, you may be able to receive information from the unit's Air Force Family Readiness Program, Army Family Readiness Group, Marine Corps Key Volunteer Network, or Navy Ombudsman or Family Support Groups.
- *Command and unit Web sites.* Many commands and units have their own Web sites, which may include videos and pictures.

If your service member is married, the service branch has an obligation only to communicate with his or her spouse, so you may have to get your information through your son- or daughter-in-law. Be aware that communication with your service member may be difficult for reasons including power outages, travel, and remote locations. Also, there may be limitations on what your service member can reveal to you, such as precise locations and activities. Remember, no news is often good news. Your service member may be wrapped up in mission operations and unable to communicate. In a serious emergency, the family will be notified through official channels.

Managing your emotions

Even though your son or daughter is an adult, you are still his or her parent. It's natural to be concerned for your child's safety, especially when you don't know what he or she is doing.

- *Ask your service member to describe his or her assignment, if possible.* The unknown tends to make us anxious. It will help if you can picture your service member going about his or her daily routines.
- Establish a support group of family and friends. Being around people you care about and who care about you is comforting. Make sure there are people you can call when you are feeling sad or anxious. Try to spend time doing things you enjoy with people you like.
- *Find others in similar situations.* Friends and colleagues are important, but so is being in touch with people whose loved ones are also on military assignment. Talking with other parents in the same situation can be comforting and will allow you to share information. If you don't know anyone, contact the military and ask whether there's a support group in your area. There are some very popular online parent support groups as well, including Marine Parents (www.marineparents.org).
- *Consider limiting your television news viewing if your service member is in an area of conflict.* You may feel more upset than informed by these reports.
- If you hear or read something upsetting that you think your son or daughter may be involved with, call the family support center. The people there will be able to give you more information or direct you to someone who can help.
- *Be sure you've discussed with your service member who he or she has designated as the communication point of contact for*

the unit or command. If it's not you, be sure the point of contact has your contact information, including any addresses where you may be staying away from home. This way you know you'll be found without difficulty should something happen to your son or daughter.

- *Volunteer your time to causes near to your service member's heart.* Doing something you know would make your son or

- *The American Red Cross.* Volunteer your time. Visit www.redcross.org/donate/vovlunteer to find the unit nearest you.
- *The Armed Services Blood Program.* Give blood to the troops overseas. Find out where to donate at www.tricare.osd.mil/asbpo/.
- *Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service.* Find out how to help veterans near you at www1.va.gov/volunteer/.



daughter proud is not only a good outlet for your emotions and energy, but it's a great way to show support for your service member. Help out at your son's or daughter's old high school or at the community youth center where he or she spent time after school. Volunteer at the local shelter if your son or daughter loves animals, or pitch in for a cause related to the armed forces. Here are some places to start:

Staying in touch

Notes and goodies from home can be real morale lifters. Plan to send your service member a lot of mail.

- *Send care packages.* Be aware that there are certain things you cannot send, depending on where your service member is stationed. The United States Postal Service

has a list of restrictions by zip code at www.usps.com/cpim/ftp/bulletin/2003/html/pb22101/apofpo.html.

- *Use reusable packing material.* Cushion fragile items with small packages of tissues, copies of the local newspaper, plastic, zipper-close bags filled with popped popcorn or anything else you can think of that your service member will be able to use.
- *Check the U.S. Postal Service*



site for packing tips. (www.usps.com/supportingourtroops/packingtips.htm.)

- *Leave plenty of time for your care packages to arrive.* Visit the Military Postal Service Agencies to find out how long it will take letters and packages to arrive at their destination. <http://hq-dainet.army.mil/mpsa/>.
- *Write letters.* Share everyday events, such as movies you saw, and updates on friends, family

members, neighbors, and colleagues. This will help your service member feel connected to home and prepared for any changes that may occur during the deployment. It's always a good idea to number your letters. Due to the unit's operational requirements, your son or daughter may receive letters out of sequence and the numbering will help them figure out the correct order.

- *If there's a family emergency such as a death or serious illness, you may contact your service member through the American Red Cross.* Find your local chapter in the Yellow Pages or at the Web site www.redcross.org. When you call, have on hand your service member's full name, rank or rating, branch of service, Social Security number, military address, and information about the deployed unit and the home base unit.

When your service member comes home

Your service member's return home from a deployment is cause for celebration. However, try to keep your expectations in check. Your son or daughter has had many different experiences since you were last together and may seem changed. Hopefully you kept up a steady flow of communication during the deployment so both of you will be prepared for any changes. Give your son or daughter plenty of time and space to reacquaint him or herself with home. If your service member is married, discuss homecoming plans with his or her spouse.

- *Let your service member set his or her own schedule.* If your service member is due home on leave, you'll probably want to celebrate with family and friends. Step back and let your service member do the planning. He or she may want only to catch up on sleep or spend time with friends.
- *Take your cues from your service member.* You may be full of questions, but your son or daughter may not be ready to talk about his or her deployment. Try not to press for information. Rather, be available when he or she is ready to talk.
- *If you are concerned about your service member's behavior, encourage him or her to seek help.* Your son or daughter may have seen combat or had other upsetting experiences while deployed. Some behavior changes to look out for include mood swings, sleep disturbances, rage, fear, trouble concentrating, and frequent, disturbing thoughts. This may be normal in the beginning, but cause for concern if the changes are severe or continue over time. If you have concerns, ask your service member to speak with a military chaplain, his or her base family center, or a One Source program counselor.

This article was written with the help of Mary Craig, Marine Corps Family Team Building Program Section Head; Evonne Carawan, Program Manager; Marine Corps Single Marine Program; and Bill Ray, Commander Navy Installations Command.

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CHILDREN



CHILDREN AND DEPLOYMENT

Parenting while away from home is not easy. Some separated parents find it so emotionally difficult they withdraw and become significantly less involved in the lives of their children while they are apart. This, of course, is not good either for the parent or the children, not to mention the difficulty this causes the parent/caregiver who is at home alone. The most important aspect of parenting from a distance is making those small efforts to stay in touch. The absent parent should do or say something to let the children know they are missed is most important

phone calls, postcards, letters, e-mail and Web sites, just to name a few. Use the ones that work best for you. And use them often!

Put a “Message in a Bottle”

Before you leave, write as many short messages to your child as you can and put them in a large jar, can, or box. Tell your child to pull out one message a day while you’re gone.

Ways to Stay Involved with Your Children During Deployment

Courtesy of the “National Fatherhood Initiative”

Most of us don’t want to think about deployment. After all, it means time away from those we love! But the fact is that military families do separate. Deployment can be tough when you don’t prepare for it. Here are 10 great tips that can help you and your family make it through deployment. Good luck on a successful deployment! Americans appreciate the sacrifices that you make to defend our freedom and way of life!

Be Creative

Today’s military offers many ways to stay connected: video and cassette tapes, video conferencing,



Draw Pictures for Your Children

Your kids will love to receive your drawings. Everyone can draw. Yes, even you! The best part is that your kids will love your artwork, even if you don’t. So take a pencil, some paper and five minutes to draw



a simple picture of you and your child. Then give it to them. You will make their day.

Record Helpful Phone Numbers

The parent who stays home will need to know who to call in a crisis. Even when it's not a crisis, it's easier to have a phone list handy to avoid fumbling for it while the kids are screaming. Make the list before you're deployed. If you're already deployed, encourage the other parent that stays home to do it.

Get Your House in Order

Take care of financial, medical, and legal needs before you leave. Create a deployment spending plan for the family and decide which parent will pay the monthly bills during deployment. It might make sense to have two checking accounts, one for the parent who stays home and one for the deployed parent. Make sure your family knows how to use its medical insurance and to get legal aid from the military. Create a Family Care Plan, offered by the military. It describes how your family will want financial, medical and legal affairs handled during deployment.

Prepare for Changes in Your Children

The biggest complaint many military parents have about deployment is the changes that they will miss in their children. They might miss the first steps, or the first words, or the first birthday. One way to accept the changes is to stay connected as much as possible during deployment. That way the changes won't overwhelm you when you return.

Learn the Basics of Child Development

Even though your children will change while you're away, they will do so in regular and predictable ways. Take the time to learn the basics of child development. If you know what your children will be able to do and not do when you return, you will know what to expect. Suppose you return to a six-month-old daughter and expect that she can eat with a spoon. You might be disappointed when she grabs a handful of mashed carrots with her fist instead. Armed with knowledge about how children develop, you will know that it will take another six months before your princess' table manners improve.

Allow Your Children to Ask Questions and Express Fears

The world can be a scary place. It's your job to keep your kids safe. Kids these days not only have to deal with the boogey man and monsters in the closet, they worry about things they see on the evening news, in the paper, and in real life! War, crime and disease seem to be the main topics these days. Deployment can also scare and worry kids. Before and after you leave, talk with your children calmly and reassure them that everything is okay. Allow them to ask questions and express fears about anything. This will comfort your children.

Get Help If You Need It

If you need help during deployment, it is available. There are all kinds of help for all kinds of problems. You're not alone. Do you have the blues or feel depressed? Do you need a baby-sitter because you're up to your neck in kids? Are you in a deep crisis and need spiritual guidance? Regardless of your need, there are people who can help. Check your local phone book for counselors, parenting classes, spiritual leaders, recreational outlets, swimming pools, suicide hot lines, social organizations, gyms, libraries and more. The military has many activities for families—everything from outdoor events to basketball leagues to private counseling. It's all at your fingertips. If nothing else, call a relative or an old friend. Reach out for help. . . for your children's sake.

Remember Your Sacrifice for Country and Family

It's no surprise: Parents give up a lot for their children. And military parents give up more than most. They give up personal time, family time, and stable home lives. Who benefits from your sacrifice? Your family, your neighbors and all Americans! Talk with your kids about the meaning of this sacrifice. It will make it easier for them to handle being away from you.

Preparing the Children.

Communication is necessary to help children cope with their parent's absence during deployment.

- Spend time talking with your child about the deployment. At your child's level, explain why dad/mom is going, where, with whom and for how long.

- Sit down with the whole family and talk about feelings. Let each member of the family express how they feel about the separation.
- Discuss the rules of the house. Make them "house rules" rather than Mom's or Dad's rules.
- Encourage the older children to talk with the younger ones about previous deployments – how long it seemed, what they did, how they felt while Dad/Mom was away and what it was like when he/she returned.
- Encourage the deploying Soldier to spend time individually with each child: play a game, go for a walk, or go out for an ice cream cone – just the two of you.
- Take pictures of each child with your Soldier, and display the pictures at your child's eye level.
- Have the deploying parent read stories and talk to the children on a tape player.

Dual Military and Single Parent Deployments

Dual military and single parent families on active duty must carefully plan for their children.

- Always have your approved Family Care Plan ready.
- Give the person caring for your child a power of attorney for medical care.
- File an "in loco parentis" for your caregiver.
- Ensure your caregiver has a valid driver's license.
- Make financial arrangements for all the extra child-related expenses.
- Make sure the rear detachment commander has up-to-date information such as your current address, phone number, and Family Care Plan.
- Keep in touch with your child's teacher. Work together to evaluate, avoid or redirect behaviors resulting from Dad/Mom's absence.
- Even though it does not require approval by the unit, it is a good idea for the parent staying behind to have a plan in writing in the event of an emergency. List who will care for your children if you become ill or are involved in an accident, and how to reach that person. Post all this information in a place that your FRG leader or rear detachment commander can easily find it - near your telephone or on your refrigerator, for example.

MORE CREATIVE “KEEP IN TOUCH” IDEAS

Some of the following ideas are courtesy of the “Dads at a Distance Activities Handbook”; others are tips from families who have made it through deployments creatively.

Before you leave, compile a “Missing Dad/ Mom Emergency Box”. When your child is missing you a lot, have him/her choose something from the box. This box might include candy, a favorite video or CD, paper to write you a letter or draw you a picture, phone numbers of where you can be reached and at what times, etc.

Have your child create a “Treasure Box” for the deploying Soldier. Your child will enjoy knowing that all the letters he/she sends you will be stored in a safe place—and the Soldier will enjoy watching it fill up with “treasure.”

Hide a small gift under your child’s pillow before you leave. Before you go, hide your child’s favorite candy bars all over the house.

Post funny sticky-notes in specially hidden places. When your child goes to get his/her toothbrush, there will be an extra “Thanks for brushing those fangs!” waiting there with the toothpaste.

Using a permanent marker, write fun messages on household items your child will be using while you are away, such as a shampoo bottle, cereal box, carton of milk, tube of toothpaste, etc.



LONG DISTANCE FUN

Ask your child what profession he/she wants to go into and then research that career with your child.

Start a joint family history project. Ask your child which relatives he/she would like to get to know better and have each relative send stories or information about his/her childhood. Have your child organize all the stories and information in a three-ring binder, so you can read it together at a later time.

Join a fan club together.

Buy two identical pairs of socks and send one pair to your child. Choose a day when you will both wear the socks.

Learn a foreign language together. Use it in the letters you write to each other.

Write a letter to your child while sitting in a tree, (a tank, a helicopter, a tower...). Describe to your child the different perspective you have from your cool new place and ask him/her to do the same in the next letter.

Make a treat and give it to someone. Have your child do the same.

Fill out a tournament chart (NCAA, NBA, NHL, NFL, etc.) and have your child do the same. At the end of the tournament see who guessed the most outcomes correctly. Involve a prize for the winner.

Play chess or checkers together through the mail.

Write to your child as if you were a polar bear. Describe what your day would be like in your chilly locale.

Write quizzes for your child about current events in the world.

Find unique things to write your letters on. For example: airsick bags, napkins, stickers, tinfoil,

coasters, MRE boxes...

Play "Hide and Seek" from a distance. Have the person who is taking care of your child hide the treats you sent in predetermined "hiding spots." Give your child clues on how to find the treats over the phone or in a letter.

Send a bird feeder to your child and have him/her tell you about the birds that visit.

Have a contest of how many people you smile at during the day and how many people smile back. Report back to each other that night and see who won the most smiles.

Arrange to go cloud watching on the same day and share with each other the different shapes you saw in the clouds.

Chart the phases of the moon together.

Begin a "Life's Lessons Booklet" with your family. Write to your loved one every day and when the booklet is full, send it to each other.

Buy your child a talking picture frame. Put a favorite picture inside it with a fun message in your own voice.

Ask your child for a list of five to ten things he/she would like to do together in the next few years. In future letters make detailed plans of when and how you'll do these things.

Write to your child about some of the interesting careers you've seen or heard about.

What were your friends like when you were your child's age? Write a letter describing your friends and some of the activities you did with them. Ask your child to write and tell you about what he/she does with friends.

Share "Top Ten" lists. (Things you like about summer, cool things about the town you're in, top ten foods you eat on a regular basis...)



SPECIAL GIFTS

Arrange for flowers or pizza to be delivered to your family every other Saturday.



Send a jar with the approximate number of M&Ms as days that are left until you see each other. Instruct your child to eat one a day until you are together again.

Send your child a singing telegram.

Start a coin collection. Send your child money from the country/area where you are

stationed.

Send a care package that can only be opened when your child is sick. You could include a can of chicken noodle soup, a get well card, a video, a book, a silly poem, etc...

Call at a time when you wouldn't normally call. (Arrange it with the teacher to call during recess!) Then say, "I just called to say I love you."

Make a videotape of you reading bedtime stories.

Laminate a place-mat with your picture on it so your child can have dinner with you anytime.

Set the alarms on your watches to go off at the same time.

When both alarms go off, you can know that you're thinking of each other at that same time every day.

Go to bluemountain.com and send an e-card to your child every day for a week. Make up special occasions to do this often. (Examples: Backwards Day, Go Crazy day, Honor Day, Good Health Day, All Red Day...)

Have a fun message monogrammed on a towel and send it to your child.

Give your daughter a locket with your two pictures in it for her to wear every day.

Have a calendar made with pictures featuring the two of you.

Have FTD send your child a small potted plant or seeds that he/she can grow with you in mind.

Have a personalized rubber stamp made for him/her.

Make matching bookmarks with a picture of the two of you at the top of each bookmark.

Order 1 lb. of his/her favorite candy and send it in a gift-wrapped box.

Create your own "book-of-the-month club" with your child. Present them with the certificate of expectation before you leave, then pick out one book for your child to receive from you every month.

Send your child a poster or picture of his/her dream car.

Order an autographed photo of your child's sports hero and send it to him/her.

Have a star officially named after your child.

Call 1-800-282-3333.

INTERNET ACTIVITIES

Make a date and take a virtual tour of the White House together at whitehousekids.gov.

Use an Internet crossword puzzle program to make a personalized crossword puzzle for your child. Clues could include special times together, memories or each other's favorite activities.

Sign up with your child for a long distance learning course on the Internet.

Take a virtual vacation to Hawaii with your child.

Explore the PBS Web site with your child over the Internet at www.pbs.org. There are numerous fun games and information for people of all ages. For younger children, use www.pbskids.org.

Build a Web page celebrating your child's accomplishments and send the web address to him/her.

Search the Internet for Web sites your child might be interested in. Then send the Web addresses to your child like an online treasure hunt. A good place you can start looking is www.yahooligans.com.

Set a date to meet your child on the Internet and "accompany" him/her on a virtual field trip of the San Diego Zoo. Go to www.sandiegozoo.org.

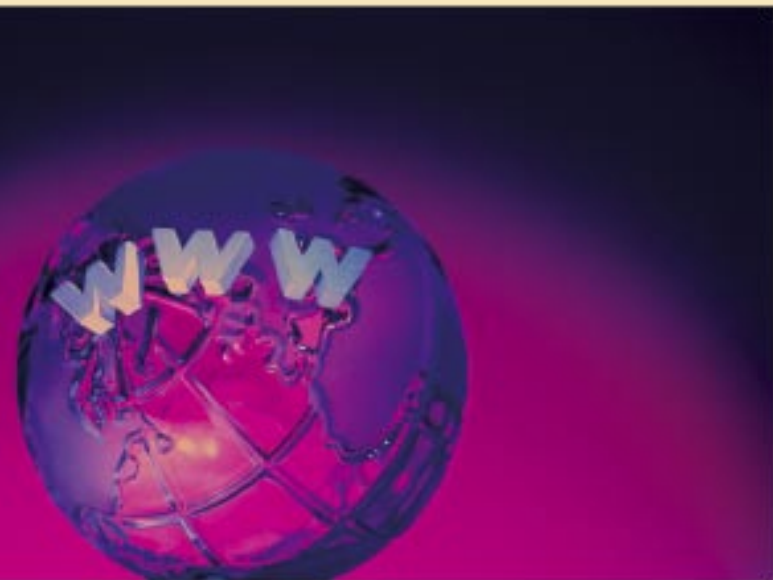
Play Internet games together like Jeopardy or

Wheel of Fortune, both of which can be found at www.sony.com.

Explore nature together at www.nationalgeographic.com.

For younger children, use www.nationalgeorahickids.com

Find out what your child knows about Internet safety. In future e-mails, teach Internet safety principles through stories or copied articles.



Helping a Young Child Cope with a Parent's Deployment

Children may find it very difficult to adjust to the absence of a parent who is called to duty. Some children may not understand why a parent has to leave, while others may be afraid for their parent's safety. Some children may even be angry with a parent for leaving. It's important to keep talking to your child and watching how he is handling the separation.

Talking with a child about deployment

When talking to a child about a parent's deployment, you can

Help your child understand that she has not done anything wrong.

Young children may think a parent is leaving because of something they've done. Try to explain that serving in the military -- and going away from time to time -- is her parent's job, just as going to the factory or office every day is what other parents do for work.

Talk about where his parent will be and what he or she will be doing. Post a map where the child can see it. Spend some time together learning about where the parent is serving. If it's on a carrier, read a book about carriers, or if the deployed parent has gone to another country, learn something about its customs or language. Being familiar with and talking about the deployed parent's daily routines and getting a better picture of where he or she is can help your child cope with the separation.

Be as honest and give as much information as possible. The child may have many questions about the military, and why her parent has to leave or whether he or she is safe. It's important to give her as much information as possible in words that she will understand.

Make sure she doesn't feel like she has been abandoned. Telling the child

that her parent is "on assignment" or "at work" may help her understand the separation and that this is a normal part of military life.

Encourage your child to talk about his feelings. Let him know that it's OK to admit that he misses his parent or feels lonely.

Help your child find ways to feel better when she's missing her parent. This could be by listening to a tape recording of her parent reading a story, looking at pictures of her missing parent, or even just talking about where he or she is.

Talk about the deployed parent frequently. Tell stories or jokes, or even say things like, "This is the sweater Daddy gave me for my birthday," or "Mom loves spaghetti, let's have that for dinner tonight." Talking about the parent will help keep his or her presence in the child's life.

Tell the child how much the missing parent loves and misses her. Sometimes children need to hear reassuring things over and over again -- remind the child of this as often as possible.

Different children may cope differently with deployment. Some children may react by trying to "bend the rules" when one parent is away, while others may have trouble sleeping or feel lonely. Pay attention to the child's behavior and look for any changes that may indicate he needs some help coping.

Maintaining routines

Children thrive on routines and consistency, especially during a difficult time like a deployment. Try to stick with your regular routines as much as possible during the deployment period. Here are some ways to do that:

Be consistent with discipline. Don't change your "house rules" just because you're managing as a single parent. It's important for children to understand that even though things have changed, they can still count on the rules that you have established staying the same.

Try to give your child a sense of stability. Try to maintain the same daily and weekly routines. You may also want to establish some new routines or rituals, such as spending a few minutes at bedtime talking about the deployed parent or looking at family pictures.

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More tips for helping children cope with deployment

Involve the child in writing letters or e-mails or making things to send to his parent. Also encourage the deployed parent to send individual letters to the child.

If it's possible, find a way to count down the time until the parent returns in a way that the child will understand. Some families make calendars, while others may fill a big jar with a sticker or candy for each day until the family member returns. There may be some situations in which you may not have an exact date of return or the deployment is extended. If that's the case, you could make a paper chain and add a link for each day that the parent is gone, then use the chain as a decoration when they return.

Plan special outings or activities. A trip to the movies, a visit to the grandparents, or even a bike ride together may help a child feel better. You may also want to plan events with children from other families that are coping with deployment.

Limit television watching, especially of military action. Watching media coverage of conflicts or wars -- even ones that the parent is not involved in -- can be emotionally draining. If your child is interested in watching television coverage of military action, try to do it together so that you can monitor what the child is seeing, answer questions, and offer reassurance.

Make sure your child's teacher is aware of the deployment. If your child's teacher is informed of the situation, he or she may be able to understand and cope with any behavior changes your child might have.

Building Family Rituals While You Are Deployed

Family life changes during a deployment. Following treasured rituals and creating new ones can help your family feel close to you throughout your separation. Rituals ground families and give members a sense of security and belonging. They remind families that they are still a family, even when they are apart.

The importance of rituals

Family rituals are customs and traditions that your family takes part in together regularly. They can be special, such as celebrating a birthday each year with a chocolate frosted layer cake, or more routine, such as sharing the evening meal. Rituals are important because they:

- *Strengthen family connections.*
- *Give children a sense of security that comes from knowing what to expect, and when.*
- *Give a family its own “personality” and sense of being unique and special.*
- *Reinforce a family’s values.*
- *Help family members cope during challenging times, such as a deployment.*

If your family has important rituals, ask them to continue these while you are gone, if possible. But also come up with some new ones to follow during your deployment. Doing so will help bridge

the miles that separate you. Look at the following ideas, and pick a few you think would be meaningful to you and your family. Be sure to stick with them throughout your deployment so they will take on the meaning and importance of family rituals.

Before deployment

- *Give your family a scrapbook to hold the letters, drawings, maps, and other souvenirs you send home.*
- *Hide small gifts or notes throughout your home.* Jot down the location of each item and bring the list with you. Every few weeks during your deployment, send home a treasure map or a clue to lead your family to one of the gifts or notes.
- *If you have small children, make tapes of yourself reading their favorite storybooks.* Ask your partner to play these for your children before bedtime each evening when you are away.
- *Have your children help you pack, if there is time.* Being involved this way will help them think and talk about your deployment and ask any questions they may be wondering about.
- *Mark on a map or globe where you will be as well as the locations of your family and relatives who live in other states or parts of the world.* This will help your children understand that you really won’t be that far away. Just remember not to mark your location if it is classified.
- *Ask your children for a special keepsake, such as a drawing or photograph, to bring with you on your deployment.* Give your children a photograph of you in

Overview

Create family rituals while you are deployed.

- The importance of rituals
- Before deployment
- During deployment
- When you’re home again

a special frame to keep near their beds.

- *Agree on a phrase you will each say before going to sleep.* It could be as simple as, “Sweet dreams, goodnight,” or a phrase from a favorite storybook (“I love you all the way to the moon and back again”). Think of your children and spouse while you say it, and ask them to think of you when they say it. Younger children may need to be reminded of what to say at first, but soon it should become routine.
- *Put your name on the prayer list at your place of worship, if this is your custom.* This will give your family and the entire community the opportunity to pray for you each weekend.

During deployment

Depending on the circumstances of your deployment, you may not have the time or ability to focus on your family relationships. But even if you can’t connect with your family as much as you’d like, small gestures are enough to keep those family bonds strong.

- *Send home recipes for your family to cook and enjoy eating together.* Every few weeks, send home “Mom’s (or Dad’s) Dish of the Month.” You don’t even

- have to be a cook to do this. The recipe can be as simple as a list of ingredients (chocolate ice cream, chocolate fudge, whipped cream. Assemble in a bowl and enjoy!); or it can be more involved, such as a full meal. Encourage your family to send pictures of each other preparing and enjoying your dish and to write you a letter describing the experience.
- Ask your family members to read your letters aloud at the dinner table. Eating together as a family is an important way to maintain connections. There's no reason why this should end if you are away. Instead, try to be there "virtually." Even when there is no letter, ask family members to bring you into their dinnertime conversation.
 - Photograph or videotape your typical day to send home. This will give your family a feel for what your days are like, helping them to feel closer to you. Ask them to do the same for you.
 - Write a running letter. Start it in the morning and carry it with you throughout the day, adding sentences describing what you're doing. Finish it in bed that night and mail it the next morning. Try to do this regularly and ask your family members to do the same.
 - Share a letter. Write the first paragraph of a letter or story, then send it to your family to add another paragraph. Continue adding to the letter throughout your deployment.
 - Think of each other at a regular time each day. Set up a time each day, adjusting for the time difference, when you will stop what you're doing for a moment and think about each other. You may

want to set your watch alarm so the moment doesn't slip past.

- Share what you know. Have a regular "show-and-tell," where you teach your children something new in an e-mail, letter, or on the telephone. Your show-and-tell can be about something new you learned at work, or it could be about something you've known for a long time (how to tie a square knot, for example.) Ask your children to do the same. They can tell you about something new they learned in school, figured out on their own, or discovered from a book or a friend.
- Surprise your children with lunchbox notes. Write and send home a batch of short "I love you" notes. Ask your spouse to periodically tuck one into your children's lunchboxes or under their pillows at night. Also send individual emails to your children. For a young child, you can create a Word document with big letters that can be printed.
- Have an ongoing trivia contest. Through e-mail or letters, ask your spouse or children trivia questions and have them do the same for you. Make it especially meaningful by asking questions about your family ("Where was Grandpa born?" "What was your first word?"). Reveal the correct answer in your next letter or e-mail.

When you're home again

Returning home from a long deployment comes with its own set of challenges as you and family members become reacquainted. The rituals you created and followed during your separation

should make this process easier because it helped keep the connection between you and your family strong.

- Return to your old family rituals. If you cooked pancakes on Sunday mornings and tucked your children into bed at night before you were deployed, start up these traditions again. However, if you find that your children have outgrown some of your rituals, find something to replace them. For example, instead of reading to your children at bedtime, play a game of cards or checkers instead.
- Continue some of your deployment rituals. There's no reason you can't adapt these to fit your new circumstances. Lunchbox notes, treasure hunts, and show-and-tells will be just as fun -- if not more -- with you home.
- Look through your family's scrapbook together. Take out the scrapbook you gave to your family before your deployment and flip through the pages together. Tell your children and spouse the stories behind the objects and the photographs. Ask your family members to share their memories of receiving your souvenirs and photographs and putting them in the scrapbook.

This article was written with the help of Mary Craig, Marine Corps Family Team Building Program Section Head; Air Force Chaplain Robert Roffman, Lackland AFB, Permanent Party Branch; and Navy Chaplain Steven P. Unger, LCDR, CHC, Religious Ministries Branch, Marine Corps Combat Development Command.

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Questions & Answers about children's reactions to war

1. Is it a good idea for my children to watch news about the fighting that their parent is involved in?

Children can become stressed by seeing or hearing too much about military conflict in the news. Your most important job as a parent is to watch how your children feel about it and to help them deal with any fears or anxieties. Limit the amount of news your children see and hear and talk with them about it. This may be good for you as well. Although you want to have accurate information and to watch the news, remember that you may not get the whole story. Check with several sources before you come to conclusions about the news reports you see and hear.

2. Recently, I have been crying most of the day because I have been so upset. I am very worried about my husband because I haven't heard anything from him for several days. This is making my children upset as well. What should I do?

During a military conflict, try to stay calm and offer comfort to your children. If you cannot do this, find some help. Contact friends or family. Let someone else look after your kids for a while. Contact the Family Center in your installation, a chaplain, or other professionals with whom you can discuss your worries. Don't just try to get by! Your children need you and you need to take care of yourself.

3. The other day, my children told me that they heard some kids at school saying that a lot of service personnel had been killed. They said the kids heard it on TV. There have been rumors, but I am not sure what the facts are. What can I say to my kids?

Help your children sort out what they have heard and seen in news reports. These reports may not tell the whole story and may stress the worst part of a military situation. This is a good opportunity to teach your children that it is okay to ask questions and talk about what they have heard. It teaches them to check information out before believing everything they hear.

4. We were watching television and before I knew it, there were pictures of wounded personnel. My kids immediately asked if their dad was at that place. What should I do?

In these situations it is best to turn off the television and talk with your children. If you know the location

of your husband and his circumstances, you should tell them if he is in danger. This may be difficult to talk about if he is in danger or if the wounded personnel were close to your husband's location. The best you may be able to do is to remind your children that he is careful and will take care of himself. If you are able to contact him, it is important for your children to know that he is okay. If your husband is not in a dangerous place, tell your children that and answer any questions they may have.

5. What are some signs of stress in children that I, as a parent, should be aware of?

Fear can cause children to regress (wet the bed, withdraw, throw tantrums) for short periods of time. If these signs continue, seek help from the Family Center in your installation, your pediatrician, or other professionals experienced in working with military families.

6. What are some things that I can say to help my children deal with their fears?

Your children need to know that their fears are real and that you know how they are feeling. You can say something like: "Everyone is afraid sometimes and it is okay to be afraid." "A lot of other people are afraid right now also, just like you." Your children need to know that you understand the reasons for their fears and worries. Say something like: "I can understand why you are fearful and upset about your dad being deployed."

Your children need time to think about their fears and to feel their emotions. You can say something like: "It's okay to cry." "It is sad and scary." "Maybe right now you need a few minutes to cry and then we can talk about your fears for your mom's safety." Or if the fears are unknown to say, "Just go ahead and cry for now and let me know when you want to talk."

Your children need time to talk about what is worrying them or what is on their minds. Their fears may be both real and imagined. Give your children time to tell you what they are fearful about so that you can help them sort out the real fears from the imagined ones. You can say things like: "Let's talk about why you are afraid for your dad." "Let's talk about what is troubling you." "Tell me what you are thinking." Your children may need help knowing how to cope with real fears. Help them think of ways to deal with fears and worries by getting them to think of things they can do. You can ask: "Can you think of something you can do when you get afraid?" "What can you do when you are thinking about your dad and you get worried?"

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Questions & Answers about deployment

1. How can I help my children deal with feelings when they either won't talk or don't seem to be able to talk?

Sometimes children just don't want to talk, and some children find it hard to talk about their feelings. Talking is not the only way your children can share their feelings. They can draw pictures about what they are feeling and thinking. You can help them make up songs or act out a story with dolls or stuffed animals. Make sure you keep giving your children time to talk. They may tell you things while they are busy, so make time to do chores together, prepare or clean up meals, play board games, or toss a ball. Bedtime, when the lights are low, may also be a time when your children are more likely to talk.

2. Is it important to prepare my children for the possibility deployment?

Yes, parents will not always know when or how they will be deployed, but they usually know that change is coming. When your children know what to expect, they have a chance to ask questions about what will happen to you and them during the deployment. This will give them time to get used to the change and to deal with all of their feelings.

3. How can I prepare my children for my deployment?

First, make sure that your children know that they can talk about what they are feeling and ask questions. Help your children by telling them where they will be staying, what will change, and what will stay the same during the deployment. Also, reassure children that they will be safe while you are away. If you have been deployed in the past, it is good to remind your children how things worked out. If there were problems, talk about what can be done to make it better this time. Plan all the ways you can stay in touch during the assignment—letters, e-mail, and phone calls. Ask your children about the ways that they want to stay in touch.

4. How should I talk to my kids about their mother leaving?

There are more moms in the services than ever before. You can help by telling your children who will do all the things that their mom usually does. If she has been the primary caretaker, talk about who will prepare their meals, help with homework, drive them to activities, and put them to bed each night. Even if both of you have shared these activities, it is still important for your children to have a good idea about what to expect. Your children will also want to know how they can stay in touch with their mother during deployment. Help your children make plans to stay in touch through letters, phone calls, email, or other means.

5. What do I say to my preschooler when both of her parents are being deployed?

It is very hard to explain to young children what is happening when both parents are going to be away for a period of time. Your child may not understand all the words, but it is important to tell her or him that you are leaving and, also, that you are coming back. It is also important for your child to know who is going to take care of her or him and who will do all the things that you normally do. Use a favorite doll or stuffed animal to show your child how they can feel safe and loved while you are away.

6. Should I tell my children where I am going even if they know that there is fighting going on?

Sometimes you cannot tell your children everything about your mission due to security issues, but you can give them an idea of where you will be. It is better if your children get information directly from you, rather than the news or other children. This will teach them to trust that you will tell the truth about what is actually going on. You may have to explain that they can't know everything so that other moms and dads can stay safe.

If you face immediate danger due to warfare, be honest with your children about what is involved. Give them a chance to ask questions. You don't have to tell them everything, but do explain how you will keep yourself safe.

7. What are some ways to help my children understand the amount of time that I will be gone?

One way is to make plans to track the time and talk

about events, like holidays and birthdays, that may occur while you are away. Find or make a calendar. Help your children choose a place for it, and plan a regular time (maybe every Sunday) to count down the days until your return or the days that you have been gone. Children may find it easier to understand a time line with important dates marked. They can personalize it to make it more real.

A calendar also gives you something to talk about when you are gone. You can ask your children about what is coming up on the calendar—school events, report cards, favorite sports activities, or holidays.

8. What do I do if I can't tell my children where their parent is?

Sometimes even families can't know where a parent is located. Your younger children may only need a general description of where the parent is. Older children can better understand the need to keep some information secret for security reasons. It is important to explain to your children, no matter what age, why you can't give them all the information. Remind them that when it is safe, you will tell them.

9. What are some ways to help my children adjust to a parent's deployment?

One of the most important ways to help your children adjust is to keep family routines as normal as possible during the time that a parent is away. As things change, talk about the new routines that need to be created. In general, routines help your children to feel safe and to know what will happen in their world.

10. What are some things my children can do to help them cope when a parent is away on assignment?

You can give your children some additional household chores. They may complain, but chores make children feel needed and capable. In other words, they are good for them! Chores can help your children think that they are doing something to help their country in a difficult time. Make a list of all the things that need to be done and talk about what each family member can do. Focus on what is important. Practice the chores and make sure each child knows how to do them. Set up a schedule and a way to record what is done. Review the plan after you have tried it out and make changes, if needed. Be sure to praise your children for what they do.

11. When my wife gets deployed, everything at home gets a little crazy. We all miss her and even I don't feel like doing anything as usual, like bed or mealtime routines. After a while, it's hard to get everything back to normal. Is this OK?

It is common for everyone to feel uneasy for a period of time after a parent is deployed. The remaining parent has a lot of mixed emotions about the deployment—anger, sadness, fear, and pride. Children also have mixed emotions. The days prior to deployment may be filled with much activity and excitement. It is only after the parent is gone that the reality begins to set in.

To help your children and yourself, it is important to get back into your usual routines. Make sure that you and your children get enough rest and eat healthy meals. Some family members may have trouble sleeping, so plan for quiet times and make bedtime routines calming. Try to have at least one meal together each day. Get back to all of your other routines. They can give you a sense of order in your daily life and, in doing so, can comfort you and keep you going during times of change or worry.

12. Is it a good idea to let my children help me pack when I'm getting ready to leave?

Involving your children when preparing for your deployment can give them a chance to think and talk about what is happening. Sometimes this is not possible because of timing and security issues, but when possible, it can help your children prepare themselves for your departure.

You can ask your children to make special keepsakes or messages that you can take with you. You can also talk with them about how you will stay in touch when you are gone. They can help you make a letter writing kit or a plan for e-mailing.

13. When my husband is gone it is hard to do the usual things. Does it make any difference if we do things differently?

When one parent is gone, some things are different. That's okay. While it helps to keep routines as normal as possible, you can try new ways of doing things. Your children may feel special if they know that they have an important assignment in the home while a parent is away. This gives them a chance to learn responsibility and to feel proud about helping the family. Find a way of living that works and feels comfortable

to everyone so that you can maintain healthy patterns, even if they are different.

14. When my husband is gone, we just don't feel quite like a family. What can we do to help us feel more like a unit?

It is hard to carry on normally when you are missing someone, especially during special family moments. It is common for family members to feel as if something is missing when they go through the usual routines. Don't avoid activities and events that are important to your family. Think about ways that you can involve the absent parent. If you have dinner together on Sundays, you can call or e-mail the parent before or after the meal. If you always watch a particular sports team together, you can call or e-mail each other about what happened. None of these alternatives is as good as having the parent there, but they help to maintain the feeling of connection.

15. My husband has been gone for several months now. We have settled into a good routine, but last night my 6th grader couldn't go to sleep. He said he was thinking about his dad. Is this common?

Even though children may adjust well while a parent is away, it is common for them to develop new issues or concerns along the way. Make time to talk with your child about feelings and watch for troubling signs, so you can deal with these issues when they come up.

If a child is especially worried, seek help from school counselors or the Family Center in your installation. Showing your child that you can deal with your problems in healthy ways can also help.

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Preparing for the deployment of a parent checklist

Communicating with children

Deployment is a stressful time for all family members, especially children. **Communicating with children** during this time of uncertainty can help ease their stress.

Use the checklist below as a guide to help you and your family prepare for deployment.

AS A PARENT, I:

- ___ Allow my children to ask questions and listen sensitively to their concerns.
- ___ Show patience when my children ask the same questions and I repeat the same answers.
- ___ Talk to my children about the changes to come for everyone.
- ___ Encourage my children to share feelings through words, play, drawings, etc.
- ___ Give open and honest answers to questions using words that my children understand.
- ___ Am aware of my own emotional reactions around my children and do not rely on them for support.
- ___ Remind my children and myself that separation can be a time for everyone to grow.
- ___ Assure my children that the parent who is leaving will miss them every day and looks forward to returning.

AS A FAMILY, WE:

- ___ Talk about why and when the parent is leaving and where the parent is going, if possible.
- ___ Talk about when the parent will return, if possible.
- ___ Talk about what it means to be on alert, if that is the status of the deploying parent.
- ___ Create a plan to help our children communicate with the parent who will be away.
- ___ Find some time to talk about feelings.
- ___ Discuss ways to feel connected while the parent is away.
- ___ Discuss the deployment with our children's teachers, childcare providers, and others so that they are aware.

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Talking about your thoughts on deployment

Talk with your children.

Tell them what you can about the deployment and encourage them to share their feelings through talk, drawings, play, etc.

Listen sensitively to your children, letting them know you are interested and ready to hear all they have to say.

Realize that your children may feel and display a variety of emotions during this time. These include sadness, loneliness, anger, depression, loss, fear, and happiness.

Let your children know that it is okay to say whatever they are feeling about the parent who is leaving.

Let your children know that other children share similar feelings about their parent's deploying.

Tell your children that the parent is leaving because he or she is doing a special job for our country.

Reassure your children.

Tell your children they are safe while the deployed parent is away.

Remind them that you have managed before during times of separation, if the parent has been deployed in the past.

Help your children stay in touch with the deployed parent through letters, phone calls, e-mails, etc.

Remind them that the deploying parent loves them and will be counting down the days to be with them!

Single Parenting While Your Partner is Deployed

While your partner is deployed and you are home with the children, there may be times when you feel like a single parent. Although the situation is temporary, there are emotional, financial, and practical day-to-day adjustments you will need to make as you cope with this transition. Even if you have friends and relatives nearby, you're likely to experience some struggles while your partner is away. How can you calm your children's fears about their parent when you are worried, too? Where will you turn when you need help? How will you find emotional support and provide your child with emotional support? The information below will help you adjust to life as a temporarily single parent.

Preparing for what's ahead

Adjusting to life while your partner is deployed should go more smoothly if you take some time beforehand to think through and discuss some of the issues you may face. Try to anticipate what might happen and put systems in place to make it easier.

- **Communication.** Discuss how you will communicate with one another, and how often. Talk about how your partner will stay in touch with the children. It's comforting for children to know they are in their parent's thoughts, even when that parent is very far away. Keep in mind, however, that depending on where your partner is deployed, he or she may not have dependable access to e-mail or a telephone.
- **Legal.** Be sure you have a power of attorney before your spouse deploys. This will allow you to act on your spouse's behalf while he or she is away. Make sure your wills are up to date as well. Your base legal office can help you do this.
- **Finances.** If your partner takes care of the bills, have him or her go over

the process with you. Set up joint checking and credit card accounts if you don't already have them in place. Ask your partner to set up a "Restricted Access Pin" (RAPIN) so you can review the monthly Leave and Earnings Statement online.

- Child care. Arrange for dependable child care during hours when you are at work and your partner would ordinarily be home with the children. If you live on or near a military installation, look into enrolling your child in a Department of Defense Child Development Program. Military child care centers are tax-subsidized and therefore usually less expensive than private child care. Fees are based on income. Care is available for children up to age 12. If there are no vacancies, ask your command's family support group or family support point of contact about other options in your area.
- Plan strategies for handling everyday issues. Figure out what you will do when you or your child is sick or you have to travel for work. Make a plan for back-up child care and be sure your child knows and understands the plan.
- Know whom to contact for emergencies. Each military service has an emergency relief society to help with financial emergencies. Get in touch with the family center at your nearest military installation or contact your local American Red Cross office if you need help.

Adjusting emotionally

A partner's deployment can bring out a range of strong emo-

tions, and some of them may seem in direct conflict with each other. You may miss your partner terribly, yet at the same time resent your partner's freedom from family responsibilities. Be aware that all of your feelings are normal reactions to a difficult situation and there is support available for you and your family.

- Seek out a support system. Family, friends, co-workers, and neighbors who are willing to help with emergencies or offer a shoulder to lean on will help you feel less alone. Realize you may need help and that it's OK to ask for it.
- Get involved with your installation's key volunteer or family readiness group. You and your children will meet other people in the same situation and find ways to help each other. These groups might sponsor holiday parties, potluck dinners, and other recreational opportunities.
- Get to know your neighbors. Know at least three of your neighbors. You may need their help during an emergency and you'll always have somebody close by for day-to-day support.
- Join a babysitting co-op or playgroup. Check with your family or community support center on base, a local church or other house of worship, or a community recreational facility such as a YMCA to see what's available. A babysitting co-op where you take turns watching children can give you a few hours to yourself each week. A playgroup will be fun for your child and offer you a chance to meet other parents.
- Take on only what you can handle. It's OK to say no to

Overview

How to adjust to life as a single parent while your partner is deployed.

- Preparing for what's ahead
- Adjusting emotionally
- Helping your child adjust
- Ways to make the adjustment easier for you

extra work or obligations. Just remind yourself that you already have your hands full with your partner away and you won't be doing anyone any favors by taking on too much. If you pick up a new commitment, drop an old one.

- Learn and practice techniques for stress management. Whether it's a funny movie, a yoga class, a short walk, or a quiet cup of tea at the end of the day, learn how to manage the stress in your life. Too much stress can have negative effects on your work and personal relationships as well as your health.

Helping your child adjust

Children may react to a parent's deployment as they would a divorce. They may worry about what will happen to them and be afraid that the parent at home will leave, too. Children 5 years of age and younger may become clingy and fearful. They may also return to old behaviors and habits, such as thumbsucking. Children 6 to 12 years old may act out at home or school, they may have trouble paying attention, and they may have trouble sleeping. Adolescents may become depressed or angry, and

may have difficulties in school. Here are ways to help:

- Keep to your pre-deployment routines as much as possible. Children find comfort in routines, whether it means bedtime stories, a silly song in the morning, or watching a Friday night video with you.
- Talk about the deployed parent. Share as much information as appropriate about the parent's location and assignment. Answer your child's questions honestly and with patience, even if she has asked the same question more than once. Asking questions over and over is one way children come to terms with new situations.
- Try to understand your child's fears. If your child seems afraid, ask what is making him scared. If your child is afraid for your service member's safety, you can talk about all of the training members of the armed forces undergo to help them be safe. If your child is afraid for his own safety, offer comfort and remind him of all of the adults who are there to help keep him safe, such as police, firefighters, teachers, relatives, friends, and yourself.
- Be consistent with discipline. Your child may test you to see if you'll bend the rules with your spouse gone. You may be tempted to give in, but what your child needs now is not permissiveness, but a sense of stability. Let your child know that the family rules stay the same even while mom or dad is away.
- Tell teachers and other adults in your child's life about the deployment. Teachers, coaches, school administrators, and religious leaders should be aware of what your child is going through so they can be on the lookout for behavior changes and provide the extra support your child needs to get through this time.
- Plan special outings or activities on days when your partner would usually be home. Do something special on weekends, holidays, or other days your partner would have off. Even a simple picnic or art project can give children something to look forward to and keep their minds off a parent's absence.
- Let your child take on one of the absent parent's chores. If they're old enough, let your children choose one of your partner's usual chores, such as taking out the trash or sweeping up at night. This will help your kids feel they're contributing to the family while easing some of the burden on you.
- Help your child communicate with the deployed parent. Encourage your child to send letters, drawings,

photographs, report cards, videotapes, or cassette tapes.

- Help your child express his or her feelings. Give your child a special notebook or blank journal, markers, stamps, and other supplies to write down thoughts, make up stories, and create pictures of how he or she is feeling.

Ways to make the adjustment easier for you

Simplify your life as much as you can. You may feel you're short on one key ingredient -- time. Raising a child, working, and managing a household can be very hectic, but if you take steps to simplify your life, you may find it easier to cope. Here are some tips for simplifying your life:

- Use a family calendar and write down appointments, birthdays, family and school events, and anything else that you need to remember or do.
- Get together with your child once a week and go over the upcoming schedule. Talk about clothes, school lunches, practices, and anything else that's on your schedule.
- Organize meal preparation. If you can, try to cook meals that will have leftovers for lunch or another meal, or cook several meals at once and freeze them. Plan a week's worth of meals before you go grocery shopping to cut out last-minute trips to the store for ingredients. Keep things simple -- for example, by preparing a "breakfast" meal like scrambled eggs for dinner every now and then.
- Learn ways to make the most of your time. Buy birthday presents for your child's friends all at once. Do a major cleaning at home on a regular basis and let it go in between those times. Go grocery shopping every two weeks instead of once a week. Make a list of all your errands and do them all at once.

Don't forget to take care of yourself. If you get enough sleep and exercise and eat well, the adjustment to life with your partner away will be easier for you and your child.

This article was written with the help of the Family Support Center Staff, Goodfellow AFB; and Kim Gates, HQMC, MCFTB Program Section Head.

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RESERVE COMPONENT



DoD Working to Increase Tricare Access for Reserve Components

By Donna Miles
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, June 8, 2005 - The Defense Department has made "tremendous efforts and strides" to meet the needs of Reserve and Guard servicemembers who now qualify for health-care coverage under the Tricare program, the program manager said today during an interview on Fox News.

Dr. David Tornberg, acting deputy director of the Tricare Management Activity and deputy assistant secretary of defense for clinical and program policy, said the recent introduction of new patients into the Tricare system presents "a challenge," but that DoD is being "very attentive" to the needs of new Tricare participants.

Thousands of Reserve and Guard servicemembers and their families became eligible to purchase health care insurance through Tricare in late April.

Congress authorized the new benefit, called Tricare Reserve Select, for reserve component members under the fiscal 2005 National Defense Authorization Act. The plan is designed to serve as a bridge for reserve-component troops leaving active duty who aren't covered by civilian employer or other health insurance plans, according to defense officials.

Tricare Reserve Select is available to all reserve component troops who have been activated since Sept. 11, 2001, served in support of a contingency operation and agree to continued service in the Selected Reserve.

To help ensure that licensed physicians across

the nation accept these and other Tricare patients, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs Dr. William Winkenwerder Jr. sent letters to national and state medical associations last August, seeking their support. The letter urged the associations to contact their members and encourage them to become Tricare providers and to treat "America's heroes - the people making sacrifices to keep our country safe and strong."

In addition, the Tricare Management Activity is surveying 20 U.S. metropolitan areas to determine what Tricare resources are available and whether they're sufficient to meet the current need, Air Force Maj. Michael Shavers, a Pentagon spokesman, told the American Forces Press Service.

The survey results will help DoD identify areas where beneficiaries may run into difficulties getting access to Tricare services and to help resolve those problems, Shavers said.

A similar survey was conducted last year, as required by the 2004 National Defense Authorization Act legislation.

As DoD works to increase the number of Tricare providers and improve access to the network, Tornberg noted that 80 percent of Guard and Reserve members called to active duty already are covered by another form of health insurance.

After 30 days on active duty, they qualify for full benefits under the Tricare system - a system Tornberg said "has one of the most generous and robust benefits available in the health insurance market."

Legislation introduced in the Senate would further expand healthcare benefits for the Guard and Reserve by allowing them to enroll in the program for a monthly premium, regardless of their duty status. Defense Department officials are studying the legislation, Tornberg said.

More information about Tricare, including a description of services available by location, is posted on the Tricare Web site tricare.osd.mil.

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA)

How USERRA
protects your right to
reemployment

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) is a federal law that gives members and former members of the U.S. armed forces (Active and Reserve) the right to go back to a civilian job held before being called up for Active duty. It also prohibits any job-related discrimination by your employer based on your military service or military service obligations.

Who is covered by USERRA's protections

You qualify for USERRA protection if you held a permanent (not temporary) civilian job before you went on Active duty. USERRA covers all private employers, state governments, and offices of the federal government. The law applies to people who serve in

- the armed forces
- the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard when engaged in Active duty for training, inactive duty training, or full-time National Guard duty
- the commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service

In time of war or national emergency, the President may also extend USERRA protections to

other categories of people. You should have received information about USERRA from your service branch. If you haven't, you can request information from your unit's legal office.

What you must do to be eligible for USERRA's protections

Being a member of one of the groups covered by USERRA does not, by itself, ensure that you are covered by the Act's reemployment protections. You must also meet the following specific conditions:

- *You must give advance notice that you will be going on Active duty.* You can give advance notice to your employer by
 - sending a letter by certified mail
 - hand delivering a letter
 - speaking with your employer directly

To guard against confusion later on (in case your employer claims you did not give advance notice), keep the receipt from the certified mail delivery, ask your employer to sign a note acknowledging receipt of a hand-delivered letter, or make notes of your conversation with your employer (the date, the person you spoke with, and what the conversation covered).

If you can't give advance notice because of military necessity or if advance notice is impossible or unreasonable under the circumstances, you may still be covered by USERRA's protections.

- *You can't be absent from your employer for more than five years.* All of your absences from your employer are combined to get this total. For example, four six-month absences add up to a total of two years of absence. Check with your military adviser to find out about certain types of absence that are excluded from this calculation.
- *Your period of service has to be honorable.* A letter from your commander is sufficient to prove this.
- *You must return to work promptly or make a timely application for reemployment.* What "promptly" means depends on the length of the absence and is spelled out very specifically in the Act.

If you are gone up to 30 days, for example, you must report back to the first shift that begins after safe travel time from your duty site plus eight hours to rest. If you are gone 31 to 180 days, you must apply in writing for work within 14 days after completing military service. If you are gone 181 days or more, you must apply in writing for work within 90 days.

If you are late in returning to work, you don't necessarily lose the right to your job. In general, you should be treated in the same way other employees are treated when they are absent from

Resources

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR)

ESGR was established in 1972 to promote cooperation and understanding between reserve members and their civilian employers and to help resolve conflicts arising from an employee's military commitments. The ESGR Web site has information for service members and employers, including practical tips on avoiding service-related job problems and the full text of USERRA.

www.esgr.org or 800-336-4590

U.S. Department of Labor

USERRA is enforced by the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS). The Department of Labor has created a "USERRA Advisor" to explain the rules and provisions of the Act to service members and employers. It is posted on the Department of Labor's Web site at:

www.dol.gov/elaws/userra0.htm

Reserve Officers Association (ROA)

The ROA is an information and advocacy organization serving Reserve, Active, retired, and former commissioned officers and warrant officers of the Uniformed Services. The ROA's magazine, *The Officer*, includes a regular column on USERRA issues. Copies of this column can be accessed on the ROA Web site. From the home page, click on "Legislative Affairs" then "ROA Law Reviews."

www.roat.org

NOTE: The article above is intended to provide general information only. It reflects the law at the time of publication of this article. To find out how the law applies to your individual situation, or how to provide notice in the appropriate way, it is important to contact your legal assistance office and speak with qualified legal counsel.

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scheduled work. You could be penalized in some way, but you may be able to return to your job.

What protections are provided by USERRA

USERRA has been interpreted over time to include a number of protections. To find out more about these, speak to your unit's legal office. You may also want to look at the resources provided at the end of this article. It's a good idea to learn about the Act's protections well before your separation.

The basic protections provided by USERRA include the following:

- *You are not responsible for finding a replacement for your job or position.*
 - *You cannot be required to use vacation time for your military training or service.*
 - *In general, you must be treated by your employer as if you never left for military service.* This means that your seniority, pension rights, or raises in salary, must be given to you as if your employment had never been interrupted and according to your company's established personnel policies.
 - *Your right to reemployment does not depend upon the existence of your old position or a vacancy.* Sometimes an employer will have to move another employee into a different position in order to reemploy a returning veteran.
 - *Your salary must be the same as the salary you were paid when you left for Active duty* (and, under the "escalator" principle, take into account the seniority you gained while absent).
 - *Your employer must make reasonable efforts to train you on new*
- equipment or techniques and to accommodate any service-related disability.*
- *If you and your family choose to go back on your company's health plan, there is no waiting period and no exclusion of pre-existing conditions.* You are entitled to immediate coverage by your company's health plan, including coverage of family members. A pre-existing condition is defined as an illness or disability that occurred before or during the time you were absent from work for military duty. The exclusion of such a condition means that the health plan will not pay for treatment of that condition. Some injuries may be excluded by your company's health plan if they were incurred or aggravated during service. Any such exclusion is based on an assessment by the Veterans Administration.
 - *You can obtain health insurance during service.* If you ask for it, your employer must continue to carry you and your family on the company health plan for up to 30 days of service at the normal cost to you.
 - *You must make up any contributions to your pension plan that you missed during your period of service.* Under the law, you are given extra time to do this.
 - *If your period of service was 181 days or more, you are protected from discharge, except for cause, for one year.* If your service was 31 to 180 days, you are protected from discharge, except for cause, for 180 days.
 - *Your employer may not discriminate against you in hiring, retention, promotions, or other benefits of employment because you are a member of, apply to be a member*

of, perform, have performed, apply to perform, or have an obligation to perform in uniformed service.

What protections are not provided by USERRA

- *Your employer is not required to pay you for time that you are absent from work for military service.* However, a federal law (5 USC 6323) does give federal civilian employees the right to 120 hours per year of paid military leave. About 40 states have similar laws for state and local government employees. And while it isn't a requirement, some private employers offer pay or partial pay during periods of military service. Check with your employer to find out about its paid military leave policy.

If you feel you are not being treated fairly

- *If you feel you are not being treated fairly or in accordance with the law, a conflict can be brought to the Ombudsmen Services Program of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR).* While the Ombudsmen Services Program does not provide legal service, it can offer informal mediation services and referrals to mediation to resolve employer conflicts. You can ask your unit's legal office for more information about this program.
- *You can file a complaint with the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS),* which is charged with enforcing USERRA.
- *You can file a court action directly, without filing a complaint with VETS.*

Supporting Military Personnel When They Return to Work

An employee who comes back to work after military service is likely to need some time to adjust. So will the returning employee's co-workers. Here are some steps you as a manager can take to help a returning service member feel more at home and part of the team.

Understanding how the returning employee feels

When a service member returns home, much has changed. Family members have continued their lives and assumed new responsibilities, and children and friends have grown and changed. The workplace has changed, too. The service member's responsibilities at work may have been re-assigned or adjusted during the deployment. He or she may feel less important now or have a hard time fitting back into old roles. He or she may also have seen combat. These memories will linger for some time to come and may temporarily affect the employee's ability to focus or concentrate at work.

The service member may be going through "culture shock" as well, a term referring to the adjustment that takes place when someone has not lived at home for some time. Culture shock can bring a roller coaster of emotions. These feelings include happiness, sadness, confusion, and anticipation, sometimes all in one day. You can help by understanding what the returning employee is experiencing and by offering your support.

Extending a welcome

You can set a positive tone by welcoming back the service member with a small occasion -- a breakfast, lunch, or informal reception of some kind -- and by making sure the person knows he or she is a valued member of the team.

- *First and foremost, offer a warm handshake and a welcoming remark.* You can say, "We're glad to have you back. And we're looking forward to helping you feel a part of what's going on here."
- *Express gratitude for the person's military service.* Returning service members like to know that their individual hardships and collective efforts are appreciated. A simple "thank you" can go a long way in helping the person feel valued.
- *Encourage small groups to chat with the returnee or have special small get-togethers.* The returning service member may have a lot to talk about or will simply appreciate special attention during this time of feeling "out of place." Some returnees will prefer not to talk at all about their experiences. It is important for other employees to respect the person's wishes and to take cues from him or her.
- *Let the returnee's family know you are thinking of them.* Sending flowers or a card shows you're happy the family is reunited and that you are there to be helpful. In larger organizations with several employees returning from

military service, a committee might be helpful to organize appropriate outreach to families and returnees.

Offering support

There are a number of ways you can offer support to an employee returning from military service:

- *Keep in mind that this is a transition time for the employee.* Chances are the employee won't be able to jump back into work with the same focus or enthusiasm right away. For the returning service member, going slow may be the optimal pace. With this in mind, plan ahead concerning staffing decisions. Over the long term, the organization will be better off if you manage in a caring and thoughtful way that allows the returning employee to get back to normal.
- *Be sure all your employees understand what to expect in terms of work during the adjustment period.*
- *Keep communication lines open.* The returnee will respond to changes at work in surprising ways. He or she may welcome change or it may be overwhelming. Keep communication lines open so you can gauge how the employee is adjusting and easing back into work. Let the returnee know that you are available to talk.
- *Be flexible.* The returning employee will be going through the ups and downs associated with culture shock and adjusting to routines at home and at work. You can help during this transition by being prepared to make adjustments to the employee's workload or schedule if necessary. Be prepared to be creative with work assignments or work hours.
- *Be alert for signs that an employee may be having difficulty coping.* These can include trouble sleeping or eating, difficulty concentrating, persistent fatigue, or frequent absences. Don't assume everything is OK because the person hasn't asked for time off or come to you with a problem. Remember to ask, "How are you doing?" or "Is there anything you need?" Let the employee know that confidential help is available through the employee assistance program (EAP) or employee resource program. You might say, "I'd like you to know that you have a resource -- a benefit through work -- that you can use to get support and help." Give the employee the telephone number of the employee resource program or EAP.
- *Periodically check in with the employee.* Expand the employee's role as his or her capacity to focus and readiness to be part of the team improves. Place some responsibility on the employee to let you know what support he or she needs. You might say, "Please let me know what I can do to help you make the adjustment back to work."
- *Ask about ways the returnee's military experiences might be used on the job.* In the military, people are exposed to new ways of managing operations and leading people on teams. It's possible that insights from military service might be useful in your workplace. You might start the discussion with a simple inquiry like, "What did you learn?"
- *In individual or group meetings, help the returnee understand the context.* Remember that changes in the workplace have occurred that you and others take for granted. Be sensitive to this. In meetings and discussions, provide history or background to help the returning employee feel more at home and more grounded in the general direction and priorities of the team.
- *Be prepared for the fact that some employees may resent the service person's return to work.* The returnee's arrival marks a change from regular routines. It is very likely that other employees have taken on new responsibilities during the person's absence. There may be new staff. A temporary worker may have done the service person's work and now must be let go. Staff may feel uncomfortable about these changes. Acknowledge people's feelings and give people an opportunity to talk about the changes.
- *Be alert to team dynamics.* If you sense that there is co-worker resentment directed at the returnee, give people a chance to voice frustrations to you and clear the air. You may need to point out that what some people may perceive as "special treatment" is in fact the company's normal response to returning service personnel. Someday others may appreciate this flexibility. Keep in mind, too, that there may be negative opinions among some workers about the war and military activities. Make efforts to limit political debate and to keep the focus on reintegrating the returnee into the work group.
- *Recognize that sometimes people experience a change in personal values or work priorities following active military service.* You might remind the returnee that help with both personal and work issues is available through the EAP or employee resource program.

The returning service member is an employee ready to become part of your team again. Keep in mind that supporting the returnee through this adjustment period will have long-term benefits for the employee and for everyone on your team.

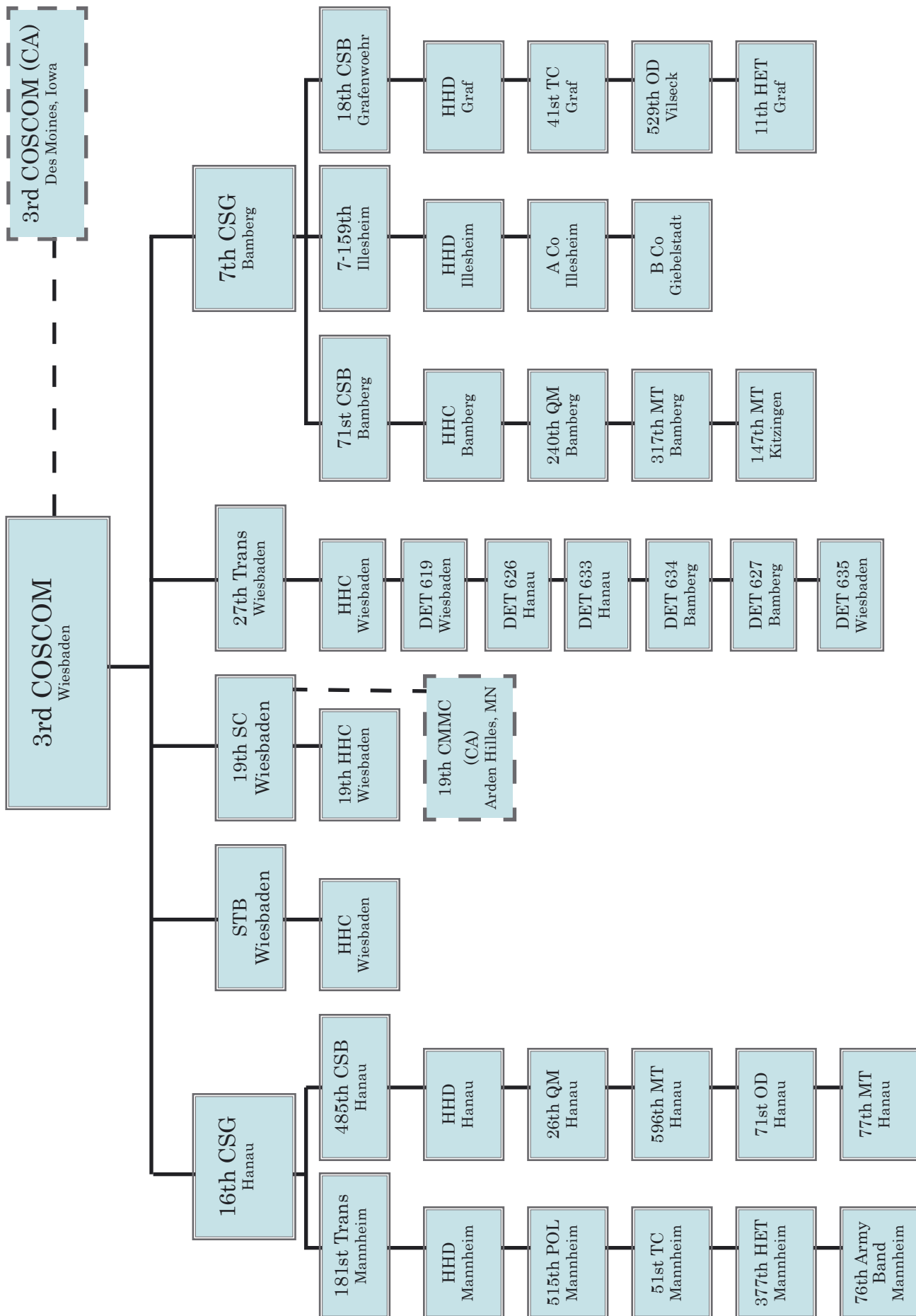
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RESOURCES



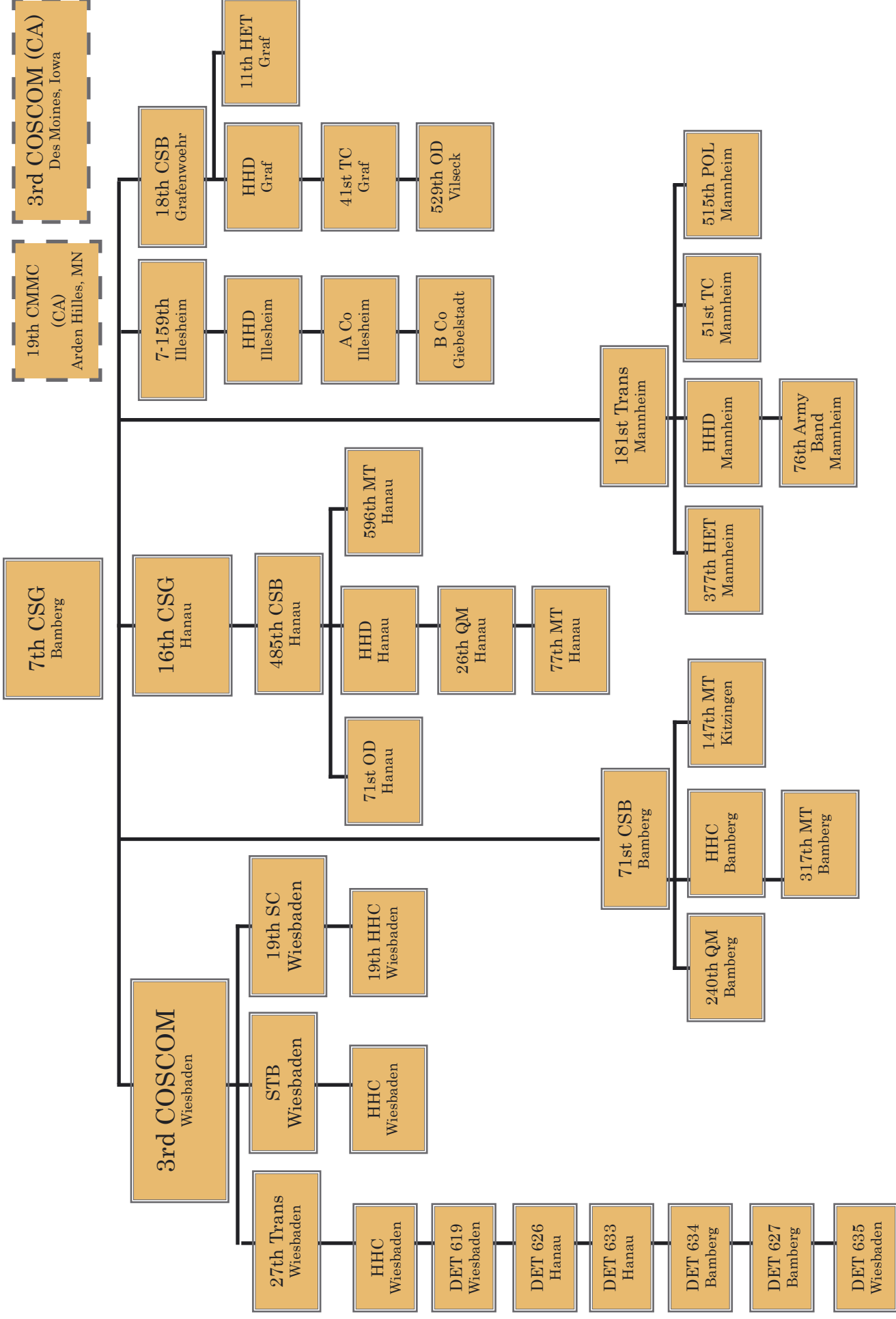
3rd Corps Support Command Organizational Chart

1 June 2005



3rd Corps Support Command Organizational Chart

Central Region (Europe) during deployment



Useful Web sites

3rd COSCOM

www.3coscom.army.mil

USAREUR

www.hqusareur.army.mil

American Legion Support Network:

www.legion.org

American Red Cross:

www.redcross.org

Army Emergency Relief:

www.aerhq.org/

Army Family Liaison Home Page:

www.aflo.org

Army Family Team Building:

www.aftb.org

Army Knowledge On-Line (AKO):

www.us.army.mil

Army Reserve:

www.army.mil/usar

Army Reserve Benefits:

www.goarmyreserve.com/benefits.htm

DEERs FAQ's:

www.tricare.osd.mil/deers/

Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS)

www.asafm.army.mil/DFAS

Department of Defense (DOD):

www.defenselink.mil

Defense Switched Network (DSN) Directory:

www.krccs.com/dsndir/DSN02IDX.HTM

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA):

www.va.gov

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve:

www.esgr.org

Communication Tips in times of crisis:

www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/cmhs/childrenAnxiety/

Family Readiness Information:

www.armycommunityservices.org/home.asp

or

www.arng.army.mil/soldier_resources/default.asp?id+37

Family Readiness Toolkit and related links/Info:

www.defenselink.mil/ra/family/toolkit/

Free Calling cards from the VFW:

www.operationuplink.org/

ID Cards/DEERS/RAPIDS:

www.dmdc.osd.mil/

Internal Revenue Service (IRS):

www.irs.gov

Leave and Earnings Statements (LES) online:

<https://maypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx>

Lifelines:

www.lifelines.com

Military Assistance Program MAPsite:

www.dod.mil/mapsite

Military One-Source:

www.militaryonesource.com

Military Periodicals:

<http://dizzy.library.arizona.edu/users/critzl/militaryperiodicals.htm>

Military Students:

www.militarystudent.org

Reserve Affairs (Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense):

www.defenselink.mil/ra/

Tragedy Assistance Programs for Survivors, Inc. (TAPS):

www.taps.org

Tricare:

www.tricare.osd.mil

Scholarship Information for Military Children:

www.fisherhouse.org

Military Child Education	Military Child Education Coalition	<u>www.militarychild.org</u>
Military Spouse Headquarters		<u>www.mshq.net/spousesites.html</u>
National Military Family Association	Identifies & resolves issues of concern to military families, provides education, information & advocacy	<u>www.nmfa.org</u>
DoDDS Europs	Department of Dependent Schools Europe Region	<u>www.dodds-e.eu.odedodea.edu</u>
DoDDS Worldwide		<u>www.odedodea.edu</u>
Sergeant Mom's Web site	Internet site for military families	<u>www.sgtmoms.com/home.asp</u>
Teen Panel	Army Teen Panel	<u>www.redstone.army.mil/armyyouth/atp2/htm</u>
Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors	For all who have lost a loved while serving in the Armed Forces	<u>www.taps.org</u>
Installation Management Agency Europe Region	Links to Area Support Group and Base information and Web sites	<u>www.ima.army.mil/europe</u>
Army Community and Family Support Center	MWR news, travel, family, events, recreation & leisure	<u>www.army.mwr.com</u>
Army Community Service		<u>www.armycommunityservice.org</u>
Army Family Liaison Office	Ombudsman for the Army Family	<u>www.aflo.org</u>
HOOAH 4 Health	Specifically designed to address the force health protection & readiness requirements of the Army	<u>www.hooah4health.org</u>

My Web sites:

SOLDIER'S CHECKLIST

Automotive:

- _____ Proper periodic maintenance up-to-date (oil change, lubrication, tune-up, fluid levels)
- _____ Equipment in good condition (brakes, tires, battery, lights)
- _____ Insurance policy adequate (liability, medical, uninsured motorists, damage to automobile)
- _____ Road service policy (if desired; provides assistance with flats, lock-outs, and other emergencies)
- _____ Vehicle registration/license (on post and state) and renewal dates current/known
- _____ State annual safety inspection current and renewal date known
- _____ Driver's license for spouse current and renewal date known
- _____ Spouse has automotive papers (tire warranty, battery guarantee, insurance policy, road service card)
- _____ Spouse has automobile information: warranties/guarantees in effect and from whom; correct tire pressure and how to inflate and check tires; oil to use and how to fill and check dipstick; gasoline to use; where to go for maintenance and repair services; how to get emergency road service; where car keys and spares are located
- _____ Spouse familiar with bus routes and alternative transportation in case the family car is out of service

Family:

- _____ Unit has the complete current address and telephone number for your family, along with the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of one or two relatives, neighbors, or friends who will know where your family is living (if you do not have a phone, list neighbors' numbers)

Make sure spouse has:

- _____ Name, address, and telephone number of your landlord or mortgage company
- _____ Names, addresses, and telephone numbers for your commander, Army Community Service Center, Guard or Reserve Family Program Coordinator, rear detachment commander, and Family Readiness Group representatives

Soldier's Checklist—Page 2

- _____ Current ID cards for each member of your family (check expiration dates)
- _____ Keys (house, car, garage, personal storage company, safety deposit box)
- _____ Marriage certificate
- _____ Birth certificates
- _____ Insurance policies (life, home, automobile)
- _____ Family social security numbers
- _____ Deeds and/or mortgage papers
- _____ School registration papers
- _____ Proof of service documents
- _____ Copies of orders and all endorsements
- _____ Shipping documents and/or household goods inventory
- _____ Court orders for support and custody of legal dependents
- _____ Unit mail card

And if appropriate:

- _____ Naturalization papers
- _____ Divorce decree and separation agreements
- _____ Adoption papers
- _____ Death certificate

Financial:

- _____ Class EE Savings Bond allotment applied for (if desired)
- _____ Bank or credit union accounts in both names with an “or” rather than an “and” between the names (checking, savings, and any other accounts)
- _____ Spouse has account number, bank books, checkbooks, ATM card
- _____ Spouse has credit cards, bills, information on amounts due, and when and how to report lost cards
- _____ Spouse knows amounts due on loans, monthly payment dates, addresses and phone numbers of loan companies
- _____ Spouse is aware of savings bonds and securities owned, where they are, and how to gain access to them if needed

Soldier's Checklist—Page 3

- _____ Spouse has a signed release from the soldier to pick up a copy of LES
- _____ Spouse is aware of all bills that need to be paid routinely, with address and telephone number for each (rent or mortgage, car payment, telephone, electricity, appliance/furniture payments, water, credit cards, garbage collection, all types of insurance, debt repayment, cable television, dues and subscriptions, and so on)
- _____ Spouse has access to copies of state and federal income tax returns for the last five years; the name, address, and telephone number of the person or company who helped you with your return last year, along with information, forms, and tax deductible receipts for the current year
- _____ Spouse knows where to go for financial assistance in times of crisis: Army Community Services, Army Emergency Relief, rear detachment commander, Family Assistance Center, Guard or Reserve Family Program Coordinator

Legal:

- _____ Spouse has the name, address, and telephone number of your private or military attorney or legal advisor
- _____ You and your spouse have current wills to specify how you want your property handled and distributed in the case of the death of either
- _____ If needed, spouse has Power of Attorney giving him or her the right to sign your name and do the things you could do if you were actually present; may be specific or general
- _____ Spouse has copies of all insurance policies, along with the name and telephone number of your insurance agents
- _____ Spouse has information on where to go for legal aid: Legal Assistance Office, rear detachment commander, Family Assistance Center, Guard or Reserve Family Program Coordinator

Medical:

- _____ Spouse has family medical cards/knows how to get medical records
- _____ Spouse has family immunization records; shots are up to date
- _____ Spouse knows medications/allergies of all family members
- _____ Prescriptions (medical and optical) are readily available
- _____ Rear Detachment Officer/ACS knows of family members with special needs, Exceptional Family Member Program, or chronic medical condition

Soldier's Checklist—Page 4

_____ Spouse has phone numbers for medical and dental services: emergency care, outpatient and inpatient medical care, pharmacy, routine or emergency dental care, and health benefits advisor for assistance with TRICARE

Security/Safety:

- _____ Military or local police crime prevention survey for your quarters has been conducted
- _____ Your home or apartment has at least a front door “peephole” and adequate locks on all doors and windows
- _____ Your family’s name is on the Military Police Quarters Checklist
- _____ Your smoke detector is working and has a new battery
- _____ Fire extinguishers are charged and are in good working condition; family members know where they are and how to use them
- _____ Your family is familiar with alternate exits they can use to leave the home from each room in case of fire or other emergency
- _____ Spouse knows how to reach police, MPs, fire department, ambulance, poison information center, chaplains, help line; locate numbers by the telephone
- _____ Spouse and older children know how to turn off electricity, water, and gas in case of an emergency

TO THE SPOUSE

Once a unit has deployed, it is too late to realize you need your spouse’s signature or don’t know where things are or how important tasks are done. These problems can easily be avoided. The best solution is to be totally prepared.

True family readiness comes from a series of minor tasks accomplished well in advance rather than a sudden “crash” program begun after receiving an unexpected deployment notice. Last-minute rushing produces needless family worry and stress. It causes many parts of the family readiness plan to be left undone.

By looking ahead and anticipating the likelihood of a deployment, you and your loved ones can adequately plan for this separation. Remember, once your soldier has been deployed, the responsibility for your family transfers directly to you. Ultimately, you are responsible for knowing your rights and privileges and what resources are available to you as an Army spouse.

SPOUSE'S CHECKLIST

- _____ Take AFTB classes
- _____ Get to know community resources, services, and locations

Automotive:

- _____ Get automobile key (and spares)
- _____ Get garage key (and spares), if applicable
- _____ Have oil changed, new oil and air filter installed, and car lubricated; know the mileage reading when the oil should be changed next
- _____ Make sure all fluid levels are up to normal (oil, transmission fluid, brake and steering fluid, water); know how to check and fill them yourself (if needed) and what gasoline to use
- _____ Make sure all vital equipment is in good condition and working order (including brakes, tires, battery, belts, hoses, headlights/high and low beams, tail lights, brake lights, turn signals)
- _____ Review your insurance policy to make sure it provides adequate coverage (liability, medical, uninsured motorist, damage to your car and others); know the renewal date, cost of renewal, who to contact to renew the policy (name, address, and telephone number)
- _____ Investigate a road service policy (if desired) to provide assistance with flat tires, towing, stalled engine, being locked out of your car, and other emergencies; know what your policy covers, when it expires and has to be renewed, cost of renewal, who to contact to renew (name, address, and telephone number); know what to do if you don't have this coverage and one of these events happens
- _____ Look into the renewal of state and on-post vehicle registration (year, cost, where to go, what to do)
- _____ Check your state driver's license expiration date, cost to renew, where to go, what to do
- _____ Check your annual state automotive safety check, if required (when it expires, cost to renew, where to go, and anything that may have to be repaired or replaced to pass this inspection)
- _____ Take possession of automotive papers (car registration, safety inspection, tire warranties, battery guarantee, insurance policy and certificate of insurance, road service card); know where they are, what they mean, how to use them
- _____ Learn where to go, who to see or call when you have problems with the automobile (routine maintenance, auto repair, tires, oil changes, and lubrication)

Spouse's Checklist—Page 2

- _____ Learn what alternative transportation is available (on post, car pools, taxis, city buses, friends)
- _____ Prepare a list of automotive “do’s and don’ts” and hints on car care

Family:

- _____ Make sure your spouse’s unit has your name, address, and telephone number, along with the name, address, and telephone numbers of one or more people who will know where you are at all times (even if you travel or move)
- _____ Get the name, address, and telephone number of your landlord, mortgage company, or government housing office
- _____ Get the names and telephone numbers of key members of your Family Readiness Group, your unit’s rear detachment commander and chaplain, Family Assistance Center, Guard or Reserve Family Program Coordinator
- _____ Make sure you have a military ID card for each member of your family
- _____ Get the keys to your house, safety deposit box, personal storage company
- _____ Know when ID cards expire, and have required forms signed by sponsor before departure

Make sure you have (if appropriate):

- _____ Marriage certificate
- _____ Birth certificates
- _____ Insurance policies (life, home, auto)
- _____ Family social security numbers (including your children’s)
- _____ Rental or lease papers (if appropriate)
- _____ Deeds and/or mortgage papers (if appropriate)
- _____ School registration papers (if appropriate)
- _____ Spouse’s proof of military service documents
- _____ Copies of your spouse’s orders and all amendments
- _____ Shipping documents and/or household goods inventory
- _____ Court orders for support and custody of legal dependents
- _____ Unit mail card
- _____ Copy of your most recent allotment request (if appropriate)
- _____ Naturalization papers (if appropriate)—know the expiration date and prepare paperwork in advance

Spouse's Checklist—Page 3

- _____ Divorce decree (if appropriate)
- _____ Adoption papers (if appropriate)
- _____ Death certificates (if appropriate)

Financial:

- _____ Take possession of appropriate bank books, ATM cards, checkbooks, credit union papers or books, credit cards
- _____ Know how to report lost credit cards and how to request replacements. If a credit card is lost or stolen, report it immediately to the issuing company AND the credit-reporting agencies listed in the front of the Resources section of this handbook.
- _____ Make sure you can make deposits and withdrawals with only your signature. If the account shows an “and” between your spouse’s name and yours, it requires both signatures; an “or” ensures you can make deposits and withdrawals in the absence of your spouse. This can be changed only while the soldier is here.
- _____ Keep a list of automatic deposits and withdrawals or payments made to financial accounts (paycheck, insurance, loan, or bill payments)
- _____ Have your spouse apply for a Class EE Savings Bond allotment (if desired and appropriate), and keep a copy of the signed application

Important documents you should have:

- _____ Get a Power of Attorney, unit mail card, and military ID card if you will have to pick up your spouse’s paycheck and/or mail from the unit
- _____ Prepare a list of outstanding payments, loans, and other obligations with due dates, amount owed, who to pay, contact person, address and telephone numbers
- _____ Prepare a list of investments such as securities or bonds with their value, contact person’s name, address and telephone number; know how to cash these in an emergency
- _____ Get copies of the past five years’ state and federal income tax returns and everything needed for the next filing, including due dates and who to contact for assistance in preparing the returns
- _____ Prepare a list of military and community organizations that offer financial advice, counseling, information, and assistance

Spouse's Checklist—Page 4

Legal:

- _____ Get the name, address, and telephone number of your military or private attorney or legal advisor
- _____ Get a Power of Attorney (general or limited) if you will need to sign documents or act on your spouse's behalf during the deployment
- _____ Make sure your will and your spouse's will are up to date and valid
- _____ Get copies of all insurance policies, and find out what is covered and to what extent; get contact person's name, address, and telephone number; ask whether you need a Power of Attorney to file a claim during your spouse's deployment
- _____ Secure a list of military and community organizations that offer legal advice, counseling, information, and assistance

Medical:

- _____ Make sure you have family medical cards for you and your children
- _____ Make sure you have family shot records for you and your children
- _____ Make sure current prescriptions for medicine and glasses or contact lenses are available
- _____ Get a list of military, community, state, and federal organizations that offer medical, mental or emotional, dental, and optical assistance

Security/Safety:

- _____ Request a military or local police crime prevention survey for your home
- _____ Add a "peephole" to at least your front door and adequate locks to all of your doors and windows
- _____ Place your family's name on the Military Police Quarters Checklist (or notify the local police if you live in a civilian community) if your family will be away from home for an extended period
- _____ Install a smoke detector (or check existing detectors) in key areas of your residence (kitchen, bedroom, living room, shop/garage)
- _____ Install a fire extinguisher (or inspect existing extinguisher) in key areas of your residence (also recommended for your automobile)
- _____ Discuss with your family alternate exits they can use to leave your home from each room in case of a fire or other emergency
- _____ Get a list of military and community organizations that offer security/safety advice, counseling, information, and assistance

MONTHLY FINANCIAL WORKSHEET

Name of Bank: _____

Location: _____

Checking Account Number: _____

Income:

Base Pay	\$ _____
Quarters Allowance (BAH)	\$ _____
BAS (Basic Allowance for Subsistence)	\$ _____
Other Allowance	\$ _____
TOTAL	\$ _____

Deductions:

Federal Withholding Tax	\$ _____
State Withholding Tax	\$ _____
FICA Tax (Social Security)	\$ _____
SGLI (Servicemen's Group Life Insurance)	\$ _____
Allotments	\$ _____
Other Deductions (dental, etc.)	\$ _____
TOTAL	\$ _____
AVAILABLE INCOME (Income minus Deductions):	\$ _____

Monthly Expenses:

	Amount	Due Date
Rent/Mortgage	\$ _____	_____
Utilities:	\$ _____	_____
Gas	\$ _____	_____
Electricity	\$ _____	_____
Telephone	\$ _____	_____
Heating oil	\$ _____	_____
Water	\$ _____	_____
Food (all groceries, including pet food)	\$ _____	_____

Monthly Financial Worksheet—Page 2

Monthly Expenses:

	Amount	Due Date
Clothing Purchase	\$ _____	_____
Clothing Care (laundry, dry cleaning)	\$ _____	_____
Personal Items (hair care, toiletries)	\$ _____	_____
Installment payments:		
Car	\$ _____	_____
Furniture	\$ _____	_____
Appliances	\$ _____	_____
Insurance (all types)	\$ _____	_____
TV (cable)	\$ _____	_____
Newspaper/Magazines/Books	\$ _____	_____
Gasoline	\$ _____	_____
Recreation (movies, bowling, restaurants)	\$ _____	_____
Children's Allowance (including lessons)	\$ _____	_____
Childcare	\$ _____	_____
Dental and/or Medical Costs	\$ _____	_____
Gifts	\$ _____	_____
Contributions to Church or Charity	\$ _____	_____
Credit Card Account	\$ _____	_____
Credit Card Account	\$ _____	_____
Credit Card Account	\$ _____	_____
Credit Card Account	\$ _____	_____
Credit Card Account	\$ _____	_____
Savings	\$ _____	_____

Total Expenses and Savings \$ _____

Total Monthly Income: \$ _____

Difference (+ or -): \$ _____

Notes:

MAIL RELEASE FORM

Mail Release
(Please Print)

I _____, assigned to _____
(rank/name) (unit)

authorize _____ to pick up mail addressed to me
(spouse's name)

at the unit mail room during the period _____
(first day)

through _____.
(last day)

signature

Notes:

Notes:



3RD CORPS SUPPORT COMMAND



FAMILY READINESS GUIDE

SEPTEMBER 2005